

President's Letter
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Be Prepared

In May, Beverly, Robert Hagevoort, Ryan Miltner, my son Bill and I met in D.C. with our NM delegation. We were well received by all with the exception of Martin Heinrich who was too busy to meet with us. We had good discussions with everyone concerning everything from ethanol and immigration to sand dune lizards, the EPA, and the future legislation concerning dairy policy with or without the farm bill. They were very much in tune with dairy policy, having seen a constant stream of dairymen talking about FFTF. The point we made was that we could not support any farm or dairy policy that would disadvantage New Mexico producers whether by caps on production or by limits on any government payments or by any other restrictions due all or in part to our large herd size. We mentioned that our large herd size (still #1 in the nation) makes us extremely vulnerable to selective discrimination whether by production, amount of feed purchased, method of operation (eg. grazing) or any other means someone could dream up. We also talked about one of our main missions for this trip which was protecting American and New Mexico dairy producers from the potentially disastrous effects of a food scare that could be set off by food terrorism or adulteration from foreign sources which are mostly unidentified, unlabeled and therefore untested milk proteins from many different foreign countries.

Later we met with the USDA Undersecretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Edward Avalos. Also we were able to meet with the Department of Homeland Security Team involved in Food Safety. They were very receptive to our concerns about food safety. Then we ventured on to Maryland to meet with FDA Director of the Division of Plant and Dairy Food Safety, John Sheehan, and the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine Drug Residue Compliance Team. (What big titles they all have!). Our major points to discuss were the upcoming carcass residue milk testing program, and we were also requesting that any imported dairy products have at least the same level of scrutiny as our domestic products do.

The Drug Residue Compliance Team told us that the carcass residue milk testing program was still scheduled to proceed; however, they assured us that they do not wish to cause serious turmoil in our markets or damage public perception of dairy products. To that end, the testing program was redesigned to be an information gathering double blinded study in which results would be obtained, but no one dairy could be identified or held liable for residues found. Therefore, no food scares or recalls would ensue. They

told us that this study was set up to determine the risk to our nation's milk supply from dairies that have had beef carcass residues resulting from inadequate hospital treatment records. I went out on a limb and stated that DPNM, NMSU and NMDA had sponsored a drug residue avoidance program put on by Dr. Hagevoort, Dr. Wenzel, Larry Dominguez and Alf Reeb, and that we had reached nearly all our producers. I mentioned that the information presented should have lessened chances of a residue in New Mexico dairies by over 90%.

Clearly, what happened next was the lowest point of our trip, perhaps the lowest point of my whole career, when we asked John Sheehan, the FDA Director of the Division of Plant and Dairy Food Safety, about protecting the American dairy producers and consumers from unlabeled and untested imports, especially considering the terrorism threats at play in the world today and the propensity of various countries to adulterate foods for profit (China's melamine in dairy products and wheat gluten come to mind), he emphatically blasted us with the comments that we were "cloaking a trade issue in a food safety issue," and that if we had trade issues we should take them up with our trade representatives! He continued his attack on us by saying that we should not make the mistake of thinking or saying that American dairy products are the cleanest, safest and most wholesome dairy foods in the world! He said that unless we could provide him "proof" that an imported dairy product was adulterated or contaminated, he didn't feel a need to test it! (I think he did not like us, or at least doesn't like milk!) We are currently preparing a follow-up letter to Mr. Sheehan to request information backing up his comments.

As we left Washington, we were chagrined to realize that we were inspected far more closely (100% of us, 100% of the time) just entering federal buildings to see the folks who represent and work for us than the foreign dairy products that get intermingled with our own domestically produced milk for Americans to consume. Scary!

Be Prepared for the FDA milk sampling program. If you do not know the milk and beef withhold for a 5 day 30cc dose of penicillin or an IV vs IM injection of Banamine (flunixin) or the beef withhold on Excenel, you need to know! If you need help or information, call your vet, your drug company, me or Dr. Hagevoort to get the answer. This current antibiotic testing program won't have your name on it, but the next one will!

I would like to pay the most sincere tribute to Sharon Lombardi for her "mother hen" guidance of DPNM for the past 17 years! She has always worked for the betterment of NM dairy producers and her retirement is no different. Her choice of a successor and her training of Bev has been so skillful that the transition has been seamless. Thank you for your years of selfless service, Sharon!

I have served three years as President of DPNM and passed the gavel on to the new President, Luke Woelber at the last meeting. This is my final edition of the President's Letter. I have much enjoyed the challenge and the feedback to my letters. I hope that I have contributed even a small percentage as much as Sharon to the organization and to the well being of New Mexico dairy producers. A sincere thanks for all your help to Susan and Kaye and Beverly. Good Luck, Luke!

P.S. Linda and I will undoubtedly continue to write letters as needed. Remember: Less government is usually better. Every program only leads to another to fix it!