

**President's Letter**  
**Allen G. Squire**  
**September/October, 2008**

I want to take this opportunity to thank Gary Bonestroo and his family for his effort and dedication for the years he served as President of Dairy Producers of New Mexico. I certainly understand the amount of work necessary to fulfill the job duties as president. Thank you, Gary!

As our twin sons Bill & Justin leave home to enter the Dairy/Animal Science/Pre-Vet Program at ENMU-Portales under the guidance of Dr. Darren Smith, Linda and I are excited for them and at the same time saddened by our empty nest. The void has already begun to refill with the daily problems of running the dairy and a continuum of problems, challenges and issues in our industry.

As the news unfolds about USDA's downgrade in New Mexico's TB status and the three TB infected herds in California, we must consider a number of factors to help protect our herds and the future of our industry. Although TB can affect all cattle, as well as other animals and humans, the dairy industry has earned the stigma of harboring and spreading the disease. I would like to list a few methods and scenarios of how TB can spread and a few thoughts about how to avoid it.

1. Do anything possible to achieve and maintain a truly closed herd. Remember that a closed herd is not closed if you are a generous and helpful member of the community and participate in 4-H and FFA dairy replacement heifer programs. These animals can be exposed to many hundreds of animals from other dairies, calf ranches and rodeo cattle after they leave your facility. When someone (like yourself) buys the animal back after the fair or at the sale for a nice high price you have just exposed your "closed herd" to thousands of other unknown and untested cattle. At least one of the recent TB infected herds quite possibly got infected in this manner. Remember that rodeo cattle and Mexican roping steers are often at the same fairs. The 4-H and FFA programs are valuable for teaching our young people the responsibility necessary to properly care for animals. I challenge the 4-H and FFA leaders and dairy industry leaders to come up with a better way to support the kids without risking our herds and livelihoods. You are also not a closed herd if your cows, heifers or calves have any contact with outside cattle at water troughs or fence lines. If you have Mexican roping cattle nearby or participate in weekend roping with no thought for disinfection you are putting your herd at high risk.

2. Recycled cows can be a similar vector for transmission of TB. A cow culled from a genetically progressive dairy becomes a highly sought after item at sale yards. This cow when comingled with thousands of cattle in trucks, holding pens, feedlots and pastures becomes a possible TB time bomb when sold back into a dairy. To protect yourself and the buyer, always positively ID and TB test the cattle you are selling to another dairy and make certain that your cull cows go directly to slaughter. A cow with this exact history was supposedly the cow that caused New Mexico to lose its TB status even though the herd origin was TB tested clean.
3. Know what you are buying. Try to purchase replacements from a TB-free herd or a TB-free state. Have them TB tested prior to shipping. Consider re-testing 2-6 months after arrival even though modern dairy operations make it very difficult to isolate new arrivals. If your heifers leave home, test them before returning.

Even though most of the TB cases in the Southwest appear to originate, or match, the TB organism found in Mexican origin cattle, I have been repeatedly told that there is little likelihood of closing the border to the foreign animals that carry foreign animal diseases. We must learn to make biosecurity a very real issue on our dairy premises. Congress will not continue to provide millions of dollars to depopulate infected herds. It's up to us to protect ourselves from ourselves and our neighbors. New Mexico law states that rodeo cattle and Mexican steers should be positively identified and TB tested annually. This is not occurring! If you are involved with fairs or rodeos, help enforce these rules. Ask the New Mexico Livestock Board to enforce the rules that are on the books to protect the livestock industry of New Mexico.