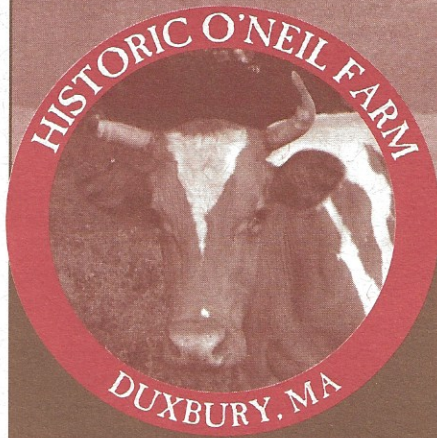


Spring 2019



The Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation committed to maintaining the 145-acre farm in agriculture in perpetuity, preserving and protecting the historic landscape and natural habitat, providing educational programs, and offering public access to the farm.

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Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc.
PO Box 2755
Duxbury, MA 02331

email:

historiconeilfarm@gmail.com
website: historiconeilfarm.org

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The Autumn Avenue trailhead parking lot is open dawn to dusk.

We welcome 2019 with our board members volunteering their time on projects that address the growing number of invasive plants encroaching on our pastures and assessing our aging buildings as we plan for a future that continues with the intent of maintaining the small farm as dairy. Carl works hard morning, noon, and night keeping his dairy as a commercially viable farm, however, the struggles he faces as a small independent farmer are real and realized by most small farms. The articles in this newsletter are a glimpse into the information that goes into planning and decision making for the future of the Historic O'Neil Farm. The take away message: "Support Your Local Farmers by Eating and Buying Locally Produced Products."

What Does a Gallon of Milk Bring to a Farmer?

By Susan Schortmann

First understand that farmers get paid by weight not by gallons. For context a gallon of milk weighs 8.6 pounds. Milk prices are set by the hundred weight. As of today, the premium hundred weight milk price is \$16.62 per hundred pounds or 0.16 per pound or \$1.37 per gallon of milk.

Now, what is the average production of a cow per day? An average cow produces 44-56 pounds per day. Therefore, an average cow can bring in \$7.04-\$8.96 a day. Sounds reasonable, right? Let's assume a farmer can bring in an average of \$8.96 a day for their milk production.

So why are cooperatives sending notices to farmers about suicide numbers to call? Why are family farms going under? Don't they make plenty of money selling milk? I hate to break it to you, but they are not. Most family farmers are in the red. Let's break down why.

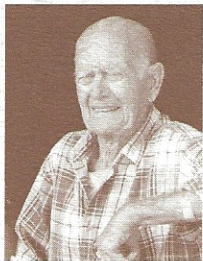
First, someone needs to milk the cow. The minimum wage for most Massachusetts workers is \$12, but the minimum wage for farm workers is \$8/hr. How often do you see a person willing to get up at 4 am to work for \$8/hr. in the northeast? It usually takes a few hours to do all the farm chores (and they need to be done twice a day) so approximately 8 hours of labor at \$12/hr. will cost the farmer at least \$96 a day.

Second, a cow needs nourishment. Whether you make it yourself or purchase it, there is a cost associated with hay. On average a bale of hay costs between \$4 and \$10. A small square bale will usually have enough hay for feeding 1 cow approximately 2 feedings. Subtracting \$4.00 for the bale of hay from our \$8.96 milk income per cow leaves \$4.96. Oh wait, we need to feed grain, silage or other feed. On average the cost of grain would be around \$14 for fifty pounds at a feed store (bulk would be less). A milking cow needs about 12 pounds a day or roughly \$3.36 per day. \$4.96 - \$3.36 now leaves \$1.60 per cow per day in milk profit. Great, still making money. However, cows also need water. On cool days the average is 30 - 50 gallons of water per day. So each day in Duxbury, a cow would cost around 13 cents per day so \$1.60 - \$.13=\$1.47 of milk profit a day. If you had 30 cows at this point you would be making \$44.10 a day or \$16,097 a year. However, that is without any labor (above we calculated \$96 a day), repairs costs for haying equipment, barn repairs, breeding costs or veterinary costs.

Is there any doubt why small scale Dairy Farmers are struggling? So next time you say how expensive a gallon of milk is, remember the money isn't going to the farmer. I am so grateful to Mr. O'Neil for preserving this small scale dairy farm for the children to know where milk comes from. I know it is not easy.



The Struggle Against Invasive Plants



Carl O'Neil

By Sam Butcher

Massachusetts farmers face many challenges bringing food to the table including rising land prices, international competition and even climate change. Adding to the challenge – managing invasive plants.

At the Historic O'Neil Farm, Multiflora Rose shows up along the lane leading to the barn, occasionally showing up farther into the fields. "With all I have to do around the farm, knocking

that back, I just can't keep up," says Carl. "Last year I spent days trying to get rid of it. Unless you dig it up by the roots it comes back just as bad the next year." "That stuff is awful," he says, pointing to the woody vine with sharp thorns.

For Carl, another menace is a nasty thistle. "Some fields are in good shape but up by the barn it's more of a challenge," says Carl, turning to a pasture of low well-grazed grasses, several thistle standing tall. "The cows eat around it. They know it's bad for them."

Carl, like many farmers, lack the resources to aggressively manage the rose, the thistle and many other plants, which are hard to eradicate and can be harmful to his cows. He worries about the application of potentially poisonous chemicals on pastures where his dairy cows graze and the effect pesticides might have on wildlife that also uses the farm and bordering woodlands as habitat. Carl currently manages undesirable plants through labor-intensive pruning and digging up the weeds by the roots.

Limited resources is also a challenge for state agencies that help farmers like Carl limit the growth of plants that threaten the Commonwealth. Jennifer Forman-Orth PhD, an environmental biologist working in the Crop and Pest Services division at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), agrees that with more resources, namely funding, the Department could do more to help farmers.

The MDAR's primary focus has to be on those invasive species meeting two criteria: they pose an immediate threat and their eradication is manageable. Her work is not limited to plants as recent efforts concentrated on the Asian long-horned beetle, pervasive across central Massachusetts. As for plants, at the moment most of Dr. Forman-Orth's time is spent working to locate and eradicate Giant Hogwood, Mile-a-Minute vine and Kudzu. The agency maintains a long list of plants it considers invasive but those three take up most of her day. Her agency helps farmers, vineyards, orchards and nurseries but does not limit assistance to those growing commercially. "Invasive species grow aggressively if not managed carefully. The plants do not care if they are growing on a farm or in the woods." For this reason, Forman-Orth does not limit her efforts to eradicating invasives on farms, she wants to eradicate them wherever she can find them.

The Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG) defines invasive plants as "non-native species that have spread into native or minimally managed plant systems in Massachusetts. These plants cause economic or environmental harm by developing self-sustaining populations and becoming dominant and/or disruptive to those systems. MIPAG lists Multi-flora rose, the thorn-laden vine on the farm as Invasive. Dozens of other plants are listed as Likely Invasive or Potentially Invasive. MDAR's Forman-Orth notes that even the designation of what plants are "invasive" can be the subject of argument. There are lots of plants that are non-native and that grow aggressively if not managed. Forman-Orth would love to provide more to help to farmers, like Carl, working to control the aggressive growth of unwanted plants. Unfortunately her agency lacks the resources to do that. "If we had more resources we could get the word out".

For Carl, designation of specific plants as Invasive, Likely Invasive or simply noxious weeds is semantics: "It is hard to keep up, but I do my best".

Corned Beef and Cabbage Recipe

Enjoy this traditional New England Corned Beef and Cabbage Recipe from board member Marie Mansfield King. For those of us not local to New England the term "corned beef" refers to the salt brining of the beef a couple of weeks before cooking. Corning the beef at home avoids the sodium nitrates that cause the red color in the super market version. According to some references, Gray corned beef has been the traditional corned beef made in the Boston area versus the red corned beef is more traditional outside of New England, especially in New York City. This recipe requires planning ahead with two weeks of preparation and 3 - 3 1/2 hours of cooking. Great comfort meal for a wonderful New England gathering of friends and family. Marie buys the "thin cut" brisket to avoid a really fatty brisket.

Corn the beef brisket 2 weeks before the date you want to cook the dinner.

Purchase a 5 lb. Beef Brisket. Make the Brine.

Ingredients for the Brine:

- 2 qts of water to cover
- 1 cup of course canning salt (not table salt)
- 1 cup of sugar
- Crush together:
 - 1 tsp mustard seeds
 - 1 tsp black pepper corns
 - 4 bay leaves
 - 8 whole cloves
 - 1 tsp coriander seeds

Bring 2qts of water to a boil in a non-corrosive pot [stainless steel is best]

Add salt, sugar and spices. Stir, remove from the heat, cool.

Add the beef brisket, submerge, covering with a plate to weigh down.

Refrigerate for 2 weeks, occasionally skim off the top of the brine keeping brine clear. Remove and rinse brisket. Discard brine

Directions for cooking Corned Beef And Cabbage. Takes about 4 hours.

Ingredients for Meal:

- a bunch of carrots peeled and cut into 3" pieces
- a bunch of turnips peeled and cut into 3" pieces
- 5 lbs of medium sized potatoes peeled left whole
- cabbage rinsed, cut into wedges
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup vinegar

Boil 2 qts of water, add brown sugar and vinegar, add the corned beef brisket, reduce heat cover and simmer for 3 - 3 1/2 hrs.

Add vegetables after about 2 1/2 hours and cook until vegetables and beef are fork tender.

Remove corned beef and vegetables from liquid and place on a large platter. Serve with mustard.



Scenes from Farm Day 2018

New England Small Dairy

By Jessica McNally

In New England small and mid-size dairy farms are still the norm in New England. Fewer than 1% of New England dairy farms have more than 1,000 milk cows; 73% of our dairy herds have fewer than 500 milk cows. Since 1992, more than 1,700 dairy farms have gone out of business—a 44% decline. Small to midsized farms have been the most affected: there are now 58% fewer dairy farms milking from 20 to 200 cows (from 3,544 in 1992 to 1,482 in 2007). In the last five years alone, 256 licensed wholesale milk producers (or 13% of the region's primary milk-producing farms) have gone out of business.*

Dairy farmers are a smart and practical breed and it is more than a job, it is a way of life. Massachusetts dairy farms have been in the same family on average for three generations, and some over 13 generations. With this said, many of these farmers are looking at new ways and markets to keep their family farms afloat. Only a handful of farmers process their milk on site, whereas most sell wholesale to Co-ops as the O'Neil Farm does to Agri-Mark. When a farmer sells to a Co-op, the prices are set at a federal level. Since the milk prices have been so low for a length of time farmers are looking for other ways to cover production costs.

Being an innovative group, farmers are creating other avenues of income from their land and rich knowledge of agriculture that has been passed down from each generation. Many farmers produce their own hay, corn and silage for their cows since many farms have downsized their herd to help lower their expenses, and this has allowed them to sell their excess supply to other farmers. They have also begun to try their hand in other forms of farming. Beekeeping has become one avenue as bees help pollinate the products they have begun to sell at their farm stands. We all know how wonderful cow manure is for our gardens. Farmers are utilizing the by products from the cows to create amazing soil for the crops they grow - vegetables, flowers, and pumpkins, to name a few. Along with using the manure themselves, they are selling it in bags and bulk to the public. For those that have an abundance of trees they have also begun selling firewood at their stands.

The expansion into niche markets enhances profitably for the farms. Some of those techniques include: alternative on the farm by processing some of their milk for raw milk, cheese, ice cream and butter. Joining the dairy cows now are dairy goats for the production of goat milk soap, along with other products. Some farmers have even broadened their animal husbandry to include pigs, sheep, and non-dairy breeds of cows.

Where there is a will there is a way. Dairy farmers are a diehard breed and will find a way to keep their family farms running. Please see below how you can help our New England Small Dairy farms succeed.



- Purchase milk from grocery stores that purchase locally.
- Buy Cabot and McCadam products (Agri-Mark supplies to both)
- Check the plant number



Every dairy product is required to provide a plant number on its label so that the milk can be tracked back to the processing plant where it was pasteurized and packaged. If you want to be sure that you are buying local milk, use WherelsMyMilkFrom.com or check for the following codes: **25-18**—Agri-Mark, West Springfield, MA, **25-08**—H.P. Hood, Agawam, MA, **25-26**—Friendly's Ice Cream, Wilbraham, MA, **09-906**—Bahler / Oak Ridge Farms, Ellington, CT, **25-56**—Mapleline Farm, Hadley, MA, **25-528**—McCray Creamery, South Hadley, MA, **25-100**—Garellick Farms, Franklin, MA (where most of the O'Neil milk goes).

*Sources: Can the Northeast Dairy Farms be Saved? Jan 16, 2017 In Agriculture and Rural Development / by Tara Sad

O'Neil Herd Stars



Jane: Light Brown

Breed: Guernsey

Jane is the oldest cow in the barn, approaching 18 this year and one of everyone's favorites. Anytime we have a new employee she likes to give them a run for their money. This may include going up the wrong aisle coming in, not going to her designated spot, or trying to sneak up to the grain cart. On many occasions to make sure everyone is paying attention she will try to sneak out the front door. Jane has not had a baby in a few years, but is still the matriarch of the farm.



Jude: Dark Brown

Breed: Guernsey

Jude is one of Jane's daughters, she will be 8 on April 16th. For those of you that were at farm day and saw the day old calf, that was Jude's. Jude takes after her mother a bit. She is always one of the first ones in the barn and if she happens to spot Mr. O'Neil be prepared for a traffic jam. She will stop and will wait until she gets some loving scratches from Mr. O'Neil. Once she is satisfied with the amount pats or scratches, then and only then will she move along. She has also been known to seek Mr. O'Neil out in the field when he is out there.



Visiting the Calf Barn on Farm Day 2018

Visit our website at
www.historiconeilfarm.org
for more Farm Day 2018 photos

Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc.
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See inside for:

Battling Invasive Plants

Corned Beef
and Cabbage
Recipe

Scenes from
Farm Day 2018

Milk from
Small Dairy Farms

O'Neil Herd Stars

Join Us for Farm Day 2019 ~ Saturday, September 21, 2019 ~

Support the Farm

Thank you for your continued financial contributions to Historic O'Neil Farm. 100% of your donation is used for trail, barnyard, field, and building maintenance, infrastructure improvements, education, and program materials for open house, school and scout visits.

Thank you to all of our volunteers we count on to help us with Farm Day, the Chandler Kindergarten visit, Bay Farm School experiential learning program, and other various group tours throughout the year.

Donations can be made using the adjacent form and mailed to:
Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc., P.O. Box 2755, Duxbury, MA 02331

Or donate online at www.historiconeilfarm.com/donate.

The board of directors thanks you for your generosity and continued support.



YES, I am committed to helping Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc. move into the future.

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other

Name: _____

Address: _____

email: _____

THANK YOU!