

Dairy farmers dedicated to land

While there has been much to do in the news in regards to dairying, it is important to understand that dairy farmers in New Mexico are strictly regulated and required to comply with a long list of environmental regulations before they are even allowed to produce milk.

It is also important to understand that these are the same producers who work and live on the farm, raise their families there, and are like any other parent in the community just as concerned about the water their families drink and the air they breathe.

Dairy farming in New Mexico has contributed significantly to the growth and prosperity of many rural communities and towns.

In order for a dairy farm to be per-

mitted, there is huge list of requirements that have to be met and sustained. There is rigorous and routine checking and sampling of the environment, the ground water, as well as the quality of the milk produced. Producers make sure they capture and utilize the nutrients from cow manure as an organic fertilizer for the crops they grow, utilizing it at so-called "agronomical rates," or the rate at which the crops benefit from all of the fertilizer without it leaching into the groundwater below. This process is nature's way of recycling organic products, much like gardeners recycling organic household waste as compost.

Most gardeners seem to understand that if you don't keep up with that compost pile, leave trash accumulating in the backyard, don't keep up with all that dogs leave behind and let the weeds grow out of control, there are going to be lots of flies and other insects to enjoy that environment.

Unless born with a fly rod in hand, most people don't seem to enjoy

flies: cows are similar. Exactly the reason why dairy farmers make sure the corrals are cleaned regularly, in the meantime storing the fertilizer temporarily while getting ready to apply these organic nutrients to the land.

In all of my years working in dairy, one thing is unambiguous and unequivocal: Dairy farmers are extremely dedicated to doing the right thing for the land they live on and the quality of life it provides for them and their families and the families that they employ. If there is one message in all of this: "A happy dairy cow makes for a happy dairy farmer" and this is the reason why sustainable dairy farming is dear and near to the almost 200 dairy families that call New Mexico home.

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