



## Quality Watch

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### Voluntary Dumps for Quality and Drug Residue Down

The key component to any quality assurance program is tracking the progress of established goals. MMPA has tracked the results of the dairy producer quality assurance program since we implemented our drug residue program in 1976 and in 1978 when we began our quality program to address rejected loads.

From time to time we have reported on the successes and failures of the two programs. The drug residue program has historically tracked voluntary dumps by MMPA members and the number of positive drug residue shipments. The poor quality program has tracked the number of voluntary dumps by members and number of rejected load shipments caused by poor quality and/or high load count shipments. I'm pleased to report the final fiscal year numbers for 2005-2006 show that MMPA members have significantly improved in both areas.

In 1984, MMPA reached a peak of 501 voluntary dumps for drug residue. That number has dropped throughout the years with only 153 voluntary dumps reported this last fiscal year. Positive drug residue shipments also peaked in 1984 at 203. That number also has consistently dropped, with a total of 51 shipments in FY 2006.

Unfortunately, it appears we have reached a plateau for the number of positive drug residue shipments. Since 2003, MMPA has averaged four drug residue shipments per month. We have been unable to identify the reason for the lack of progress in this area. In addition,

the total amount of dollars lost on positive drug residue shipments continues to be approximately \$270,000 per year. This amount has been paid for directly by producers or through their insurance company and has not significantly changed since the 1999 implementation of the penalty program in the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, which calls for producers to pay for the entire loss incurred for positive drug residue shipments.

MMPA's highest number of voluntary dumps for poor quality i.e. cooling, added water, etc., reached 502 in 1991. That number dropped to 208 voluntary dumps this past fiscal year. The number of MMPA farms that caused loads to have high bacteria counts over 300,000 peaked at 170 in 1984. We have made great strides since then, experiencing a total of 15 high load count shipments in FY 2006. In fact, we have averaged approximately 10 high load count shipments over the past nine years. While we have greatly reduced the number of these loads since we began monitoring, we are having difficulty reducing the numbers even more and are trying to identify the reason for the lack of progress in this area. The number of rejected loads for poor quality has also stagnated, with 35 being reported this past fiscal year. This number has remained about the same over the last 20 years.

One plausible reason for the plateaus in the three shipment categories is that despite the best efforts of every dairy producer, there is a certain amount of human error that occurs that can be very difficult

to control. Human error often goes undetected until the milk is shipped. This is in contrast to the significant reduction in the number of voluntary dumps over the years. Errors in those cases were identified and addressed before the milk left the farm.

The reduction of voluntary dumps is a direct result of MMPA members' vigilance and commitment to shipping the best quality milk possible. MMPA members' commitment to quality is also measured in the overall outstanding quality MMPA's milk supply as illustrated by overall bacteria and somatic cell count (SCC) levels. In October 2006, 84 percent of the MMPA members received quality premium for raw bacteria count and 82 percent for PI count.

In addition to MMPA's overall quality, SCC levels continue to be lower each year. We take pride knowing that again this year there have been zero rejected loads for quality on milk shipped to Southern markets. MMPA members' commitment to quality is a testimonial to their dedication and hard work. Once again, MMPA members will receive a record number of quality awards during local meetings.

Congratulations to all MMPA members on another outstanding year and thank you for your continued commitment to quality milk. Together, we have made significant progress. Keep up the excellent work!