



Funding the Future of Dairy Research

Ah, February! It's no wonder that February is sometimes called "the armpit of the calendar." We are tired of winter with its cold, short days, snow one week, mud the next. We welcome hints of a new beginning as the days become longer and the nights shorter. When we see the sun, it feels noticeably warmer than it did a month or two ago.

These signs also tell us that we've completed our MMPA Local Annual Meetings. We are in the midst of District Meetings, and not long after that our 2008 Annual Delegate Meeting will take place.

I remember back to our Annual Delegate Meeting in 2007, which was momentous for several reasons. It marked the retirement of Elwood Kirkpatrick from the MMPA Board after having served so effectively for many years as President. To honor Elwood's service to MMPA and the dairy industry, the MMPA Board contributed \$30,000 to establish the Elwood Kirkpatrick Dairy Science Research Endowment at Michigan State University. The endowment recognizes Elwood and guarantees that his dedication to the concept of the need for more applied research at Universities will be carried forward. This will lead to continued progress for dairy farmers and their families. That beginning balance has grown to an amazing \$63,000 through the generous contributions of many individuals and organizations.

The process has illustrated to me how a few dollars aimed at dairy research can be multiplied to a more significant sum. The Endowment has grown already to the

point where the first funds are now available to help fund dairy research at MSU. The call for proposals has been issued, and the first research projects will be approved in March 2008.

The endowment funds are handled by the University. The principal funds are invested (very successfully at MSU) and a portion of the investment income is available for distribution. The principal fund is retained and continues to grow as a portion of the investment income is reinvested each year. Because of the generous contributions and the successful investment strategies of MSU \$2,500 is already available in the Kirkpatrick Endowment to be invested in research. Having this amount available happened much sooner than was expected.

The next step is where I think it gets even more interesting. The Kirkpatrick Endowment contribution of \$2,500 was matched with another \$2,500 from the MSU Department of Animal Science, and an additional \$2,500 from the MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. To support this effort and the goal of the endowment, MMPA also matched the initial contribution by adding \$2,500 to the fund. This entire process leads to an impressive total of \$10,000 available to be awarded for dairy science research this first year.

You might wonder now, what it is I find so interesting that I'm writing this column about it on the assumption that it should be interesting to others. Well, it is a good example of what we've been told we could do with "seed" money to accomplish more dairy research.

"Seed" money means you feel strongly enough about research in a particular area to invest your money in it to get the research started. If it is important enough to you, the producer, to cause you to support it with an initial contribution, it becomes easier to convince others with money earmarked for research to join your cause and help provide a larger pot of money to be invested in the research you think needs to be done. In this case the partners are the Elwood Kirkpatrick Endowment, the Animal Science Department at MSU, the MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and MMPA. There are others who will be motivated to contribute to projects deemed important by producers in the future.

Now, returning our thoughts to the 2007 Annual Delegate Meeting, you will recall that at that meeting the MMPA delegates voted to initiate a research fund by contributing \$.01 per hundredweight from each of our farms for the milk produced in September 2007. That total amounted to just over \$30,500. The resolution specifically addresses the need for applied research due to the large decline in funds available from traditional sources for that purpose. Efforts are underway to finalize the process under which proposals will be submitted requesting funding for projects our producers feel are important to their continued success in the dairy industry. Every effort will be made to leverage our contribution as was accomplished with the first project that will be funded by the Kirkpatrick Endowment.

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