



Quality Watch

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32nd National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments

The 32nd National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS) was held in late April 2009. The NCIMS is the body that sets rules and regulations contained in the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO). The conference generally convenes every two years to review proposals that relate to changing the PMO, Methods of Making Sanitation Ratings of Milk Shippers and the Procedures and Constitution Bylaws governing the actions of the conference. These documents regulate, Grade A plants and farms, haulers and laboratories.

There were 133 proposals submitted to this year's conference, most concerning clarification of requirements currently in existence. No proposals that passed will significantly change the dairy farm inspection program. A few proposals will impact plant regulations, mostly involving pasteurizing equipment and testing procedures.

There were 29 proposals submitted involving laboratory procedural changes. One item that passed will impact our cost of doing business. That proposal extends the amount of time milk samples may be analyzed for regulatory bacteria counts from 48 to 60 hours after a milk sample is collected. Significant research data demonstrated there was no significant growth in bacteria from the current 48 hour

time limit to the proposed 60 hour time when samples are maintained at 32 - 40°F. That temperature requirement is and will remain the same. This extended time will hopefully eliminate the need for our member representatives to travel to farms to pull samples for official testing in the future. In the past, MMPA and other national dairy cooperatives encountered issues with the 48 hour time period for samples that were picked up one day and held over to deliver to the dairy the next day.

The change will allow our sample vans to continue with their normal routine and delivery of the samples to the Novi laboratory for official testing within the 60 hour time frame. The Novi laboratory will continue to make every effort to test the official samples as quickly as possible. It is not our intent to hold samples for 60 hours before testing.

We will only use this extended time when necessary, and feel adoption of this proposal will save dairy farmers money in the long run. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) supported this change and we expect it to be effective around October 1, 2009. However, the proposed change will need to be officially adopted by the NCIMS Executive Board and agreed upon by the FDA for it to become part of the PMO.

Several proposals that were not passed at the conference would have added requirements to the PMO. One item that was not passed at the conference was submitted by FDA, which proposed to require documentation and maintenance of treatment records when cows are treated with drugs on farms. This is a current recommendation, not requirement, in the PMO. Although we are a solid proponent of maintaining excellent drug treatment records on dairy farms, we do not believe it should be required in the PMO and be debited on Grade A surveys. Within MMPA and on a national level, the number of positive drug residue shipments and loads dumped have been steadily declining. This shows that producers are being vigilant in their drug residue prevention efforts and are maintaining adequate records. As a result, we believe the current voluntary system is working.

The NCIMS Executive Board and FDA will review all proposals passed. This generally occurs in September or October. Once the proposed changes are accepted, FDA will publish a list of the changes and effective dates. That information will be provided to all member representatives later this fall.