

## **Chisholm Family Farm Herd Health Procedure**

### **Humane Treatment Practices: shelter, feed, water, handling & care:**

The dairy herd has full time access to fresh pasture. They also have full time access to protective shelters. They are fed a natural diet of grasses and forbs and always have access to clean, fresh, free flowing water sources. During mosquito season, they can access high, dry ground. Low stress livestock handling that is gentle and effective is the only way in which we handle the cows. Humane treatment of the cows and their calves is of the utmost importance to us as they are our livelihood.

### **Medical Interventions Used:**

Healthy cows make healthy milk. We do everything in our power to keep our cows healthy. If medical intervention is required we begin with benign treatments that enhance the cow's systemic processes, especially the immune system. Aloe Vera and probiotics fed at various levels are very effective for this purpose. We also use homeopathy to address various ailments. If an illness becomes severe, and humane treatment calls for the use of antibiotics, the cow affected will be removed from the milking herd as we are committed to providing "beyond organic" products.

### **Feed Source & Quality Standards:**

During the growing season, our cows graze on pastures that are free from manufactured fertilizers. Free-choice hay and alfalfa hay is fed during the non-grass months and in early spring. The high quality hay maintains adequate cattle condition through the cold winters. We feed our dairy herd the highest quality hay that we have access to. All hay that is fed to our animals is locally grown and either certified organic or grown by organic standards.

The tiny quantity of grain we feed during milking is harvested from a certified organic family farm near Prague, NE. It contains certified organic, non-GMO corn, wheat, and oats.

### **Supplements:**

All cows have access to free-choice kelp meal and Redmond salt. These provide important trace minerals to the cows' diet. All lactating cows also receive a high quality mineral supplement daily that balances several of the macro-minerals and assures consumption of minor minerals. All minerals given are organic approved supplements.

### **Pasture Management:**

We rotate our cows throughout our pastures. . This management mimics how the historic herds and their pack hunting predators once moved across this landscape. Using single strand electrified polywire; we move the dairy herd onto fresh pasture daily. Previously grazed ground is allowed to recover completely before being grazed again. This assures we are not overgrazing, and in fact is proving to greatly IMPROVE the ecosystems in which we are implementing this management. We are growing more plants, capturing more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, and storing it into the soil where it belongs.

### **Testing:**

Our milk is tested monthly by the state for both somatic cell counts and bacteria levels. Test results are available for inspection at any time and are posted in the milk room on the wall along with our inspection results.

Additionally, we perform daily CMT testing which shows elevated somatic cell counts. Any quarter that ever shows even a slightly elevated result is milked with a separate quarter milk and the milk is discarded. Using a separate milking unit on an affected quarter and disinfecting

with vinegar water before using on another cow's affected quarter has effectively reduced the number of high cell count quarters we have seen and significantly reduced any mastitis outbreak. Any cows with active mastitis would be milked last and all milk will be discarded... even from unaffected quarters. Such cows would be treated with homeopathic remedies, aloe vera, and probiotics. If antibiotics ever seem warranted then that cow would be removed from the milking herd entirely.

### **Calf Rearing:**

We try to mimic nature in our calf rearing while also running a business selling milk. When we first started out (and had a much smaller herd) we used to keep the calves with their moms and the calves even came into the milking parlor with mom. As our herd increased this just became impractical. As attachments parents ourselves this became a very difficult problem for us emotionally. The solution came after much consideration, research, and close observation of our cows. What we resolved to do is this: We keep mom and baby together for the first 24 hours, then bring both into the barn. (If calf was born during the winter then they are brought to the barn immediately.) Mom is then brought through the barn to the milking area. Newborn calves are kept in an area of the barn where mom can check on baby and see baby. This somewhat mimics what cows do naturally. They hide their new baby away and come back to nurse it a few times a day. Our cows do not seem upset or stressed out when they know where their baby is and can see them when they want to. We then milk mom and bottle feed baby it's mother's milk for the first week while the milk transitions from colostrum to mature milk. After a week or so, Mom quits checking on baby and seems quite content to run with the herd full time. At this point, the calves are moved out with the other calves on pasture. Calves are quite social animals, so we keep them all together where they can play and grow up together.

Bottle feeding our calves introduces a bond between calf and us that is very helpful and important in how we milk our cows. By the time a heifer has her first calf and is ready to be milked, she already knows and trusts us so bringing her in to be milked is not a stressful event for her.