

## The Oregon Dairy Survey

The *objective* of this project is *to develop and conduct a farm survey* that includes a variety of topics to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the diversity and commonalities *of Oregon dairy farms*.

What might come to mind when you think about a dairy survey is the “Dairy 2014” study completed by USDA which collected comprehensive data about dairy practices from the top 17 states for production. Unfortunately, at number 18, Oregon wasn’t included in this survey. Because of this gap in knowledge, we have proposed to create and distribute a survey to all Grade A Oregon dairy farmers. Having numerical data for various farm practices as well as attitudes held by and challenges experienced by Oregon dairy producers would be a powerful tool for legislative and public outreach for farmers. This data would provide a comprehensive portrait of Oregon’s dairy farms and help identify strengths and weaknesses. Effective management strategies identified through the survey could be shared with all farmers and educational priorities could be identified. We could inform farmers, policy makers, extension agents, and other allied professionals about the current situation within the Oregon dairy industry.

The main part of the survey will cover basic herd demographic information (e.g., number of cows milked, breed composition, etc.) and current farm structure and practices including facilities, labor, milking facilities and procedures, ration management, pasture and grazing, calf management, heifer management, reproduction, and manure management. Questions in this section might include:

- Do you strip cows prior to milking?
- What liquid nutrition do pre-weaned calves get? (Possible answer options: waste milk, tank milk, milk replacer, a combination depending on availability, a combination depending on calf age.)
- What do you use for estrus detection? (Possible answer options: visual monitoring, automated activity monitoring, timed A.I. protocols, the bull does it.)

The second part of the survey will include reflective, “opinion” questions about current on-farm practices and perspectives on their operations.

Some example questions in this section:

- What change made on your farm in the last two years has been most economically beneficial?
- What change on your farm in the last two years has been most beneficial for quality of life?
- What is your current breakeven point for milk price?

Initial contact will come to most farmers through email. A link to the online survey will be provided. If farmers have not completed the survey after a few reminders, a paper copy will be sent in the mail along with a prepaid return envelope. I will also offer to travel to farms and complete the survey in person if necessary. The online survey would be “smartly” designed, such that the answer to a preceding question would determine which question comes next. For example, if a producer indicates that their milking herd does not graze, then the more detailed

grazing section would be skipped. The survey will be constructed for the most efficient collection of data. The goal for participation is 200 dairies. To encourage participation, we intend to offer an incentive, \$2 in advance when the survey is sent out and a \$20 Amazon gift card after completion.

We will collect and analyze the survey results. The data will be aggregated and made available, although all identifying information will be removed. That is, the data will be thoroughly anonymized.

This survey would have a large impact on the Oregon dairy industry. Pertinent results, such as the degree of labor shortage, could be used in conversations with legislators and other public policy makers. Actual numbers could supplement anecdotal accounts of challenges faced by farmers. Survey results could also be useful in marketing and promotion of the dairy industry in Oregon and in refuting false information. Extension agents and field representatives from milk coops would also benefit, as they could identify production topics where producers would benefit from additional education and training. The survey results would also provide an opportunity for dairy farmers to learn—indirectly—from each other. A producer could consider the prevalence of a particular practice or equipment when deciding whether or not to adopt it. The data would also highlight what is working well for farmers and allow us to publicize those practices or products (devices, chemicals, etc.). We will better understand the attitudes of Oregon dairy farmers and their wants and needs, which will better position us all to sustain this industry.

The projected budget for this survey is \$34,000. Donations will be used to cover my student stipend, travel costs, respondent incentives, and printing and mailing costs. The money will be held in an account with the Agricultural Research Foundation (ARF) at Oregon State University. The ARF is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, and you will receive a receipt for your generous gift.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact

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