

# DAIRY NOTES

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

KINGS COUNTY



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## New Dairies Update

*The following information is provided to make you aware of similar developments that are taking place with regards to several large new dairies proposed in Kings and in Kern counties. As a dairy producer, you may have a stake in decisions that are made at the local level. If you are interested in staying abreast of the situation, I encourage you to attend or even participate in the public hearing process in Hanford later this month.*

Last year, two large dairies were proposed by the **Borba** family to be built on a 4,677 acre site 10 miles southeast of Bakersfield in **Kern County**. If approved, the two dairies together would have a total of 28,572 milk cows, dry cows and heifers. Each of the two dairies would milk 7,200 cows. In March, the Kern County Planning Department determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be required for the project. An EIR is a technical document that is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) when a county planning agency determines that a project may have a significant effect on the environment. The EIR details all possible environmental impacts and describes measures that may be taken by the applicant to reduce (or mitigate) damaging impacts to more acceptable levels.

After months of preparation, the Borba Dairies EIR was made available for public review last fall. The EIR analyzed the effects of the dairies on water resources and quality, air emissions and odors, public health and transportation. Of all the impacts that were examined, effects on air quality were identified as the most troubling because they would be significant and unavoidable. The Kern County

Planning Commission considered all the comments received from the public during the 45-day public review period and then approved the dairies at a public meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

After approval of the dairies by the planning commission, a huge outcry from concerned citizens arose. Two hundred angry people opposed to the project came to a public meeting carrying fly swatters to debate their concerns at a local high school just before Thanksgiving. The project had been scheduled to go before the Kern County Board of Supervisors for final approval in December, but because of all the controversy the Borbas pulled their dairy project from the Supervisor's agenda for the time being. The people opposed to the dairies have formed a group called Parents for a Healthy Environment to lobby against the Borba dairies. Most of them live in the part of Bakersfield closest to the site of the proposed dairies. The group plans to hold public forums on dairy issues in the coming months. Their concerns are focused primarily on odor and flies. The Borbas are also planning educational meetings this month to inform the public about their proposed dairies.

Meanwhile, as all of this has been unfolding, the Kern County supervisors have been busy. First they enacted an "urgency" ordinance in December to require all new dairies to obtain conditional use permits. Then on January 3<sup>rd</sup> they rejected the urgency ordinance that would have tightened regulations on new dairies that they had unanimously approved just two weeks earlier. You can read more about the dairy controversy in Kern

County by going to the Bakersfield Californian's website on the internet. There are many letters, editorials and news stories that you can retrieve by doing a search on "Borba dairies" from the newspaper's website <http://www.bakersfield.com/>.

In **Kings County**, four large dairies proposed by the J.G. **Boswell** company are also undergoing close scrutiny. Known as the **Chamberlain Ranch Planned Dairy Development**, the four dairies would be located midway between Hanford and Corcoran. The total herd size for all four dairies combined would be 47,700 animals (milk cows plus dry cows and heifers). The smallest of the four dairies would milk about 3,900 cows on a 960- acre site and the largest would milk 10,300 cows on a 2400 -acre site.

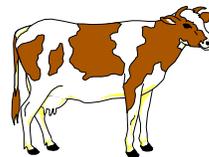
These dairies received approval by the county early last year, but Boswell decided to have the permits rescinded so that they could prepare an EIR. The decision to proceed with an EIR was made as a settlement of a lawsuit by an environmental group. The EIR was prepared by Baseline, a consulting firm that also prepared the Borba dairies EIR. The EIR summarized the significant environmental impacts of the project and described mitigation measures that would reduce the impacts to a less than significant level. It also took into account the cumulative impacts of existing or proposed dairies and other large animal confinement facilities located within the region of the project site. When it was completed, the Chamberlain Ranch dairies EIR, like the Borba dairies EIR, identified environmental impacts from air emissions (hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, odors, PM10, reactive organic gas, and methane) as being significant and unavoidable since mitigation measures would not reduce their levels to a less-than-significant level.

The EIR underwent a public review period that ended November 29. The Kings County Environmental Review Committee is now reviewing the 83 letters that were submitted by various individuals and agencies. This committee will decide whether or not the EIR adequately addresses concerns of the commentors in a public meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM in the Board of Supervisors Chambers at the Government Center in Hanford. The Kings County Planning Commission will hold **two special meetings** to consider the environmental documents for these dairies; **Monday, January 31<sup>st</sup>** and **Wednesday, February 2**. Both meetings will start at **5 PM** in the **Board of Supervisors**

**Chambers**. The public is invited to both meetings. Interested parties may make statements or present evidence regarding the proposed project at the second of the two meetings. At the conclusion of the public testimony on February 3, the Commissioners will deliberate and may take an action on the matter at that meeting or else hold it over until their regular meeting on February 7.

Meanwhile, the Kings County planning department has been busy developing information that will help to guide future dairy growth in Kings County. Individuals representing local dairies, milk processors, Farm Bureau, Western United Dairymen and various public agencies have met with the planning department several times to provide input. Initially, the group considered preparing a county-wide EIR. A general program EIR of this nature could be helpful in that it would save each individual new dairy or dairy expansion from having to prepare a costly (\$100,000 to \$200,000) EIR. The concern with a county-wide EIR is that the mitigation measures that it prescribes could set a precedent for new and existing dairies. Technologies and management practices for dealing with dairy air quality issues are costly and not well developed. Until proven practices emerge, being saddled with current expensive technologies would greatly reduce a dairy's economic viability.

For more information regarding the planning process for future dairy growth in Kings County, or for information about the Chamberlain Ranch dairies project you can contact Bill Zumwalt at 582-3211, ext. 2686 or by email to [bzumwalt@co.kings.ca.us](mailto:bzumwalt@co.kings.ca.us). Also, the Fresno Bee did a special 12-page supplement to their Sunday paper on Oct 31st entitled "King of Kings." The articles contained in the supplement give some background to the issues surrounding this project. You can access it via their web page <http://www.fresnobee.com>.



Carol Collar  
UC Farm Advisor  
Dairy, Livestock & Forages







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