I'm Nancy Coonridge and I have an Certified Organic Grade A Goat Dairy in New Mexico. I have spent the last 38 years living with goats, working on finding out how to give them a natural life. For the last 8 years my goats and dairy have been Certified Organic by New Mexico's certifying agency, NMOCC.

I want to find out who here is already Certified Organic, who would like to be, and who has their doubts about the whole thing!? I want all of you to ask any questions you have after I have given my talk, but let's especially hear from those of you who have your doubts about organics.

**Why Do You Want to Be Organic?**

Let's start off considering why you want to be organic.

- Maybe you want to have safe wonderful products for yourself, your family and your consumers.
- Maybe you are tired of contributing to the New Jersey sized agriculture induced dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi.
- Maybe that desire leads you to want to take land out of conventional production, both on your farm and on any farms you purchase feed from.
- Maybe you are ready to gain access to the Organic Market Place. This niche market is the fastest growing segment in the food industry today.

**The Organic Market Is an Untapped and Wide Open Market for Goat Dairy Producers**

There isn't a month that goes by when I don't get a request for organic goat butter, organic raw goat milk, organic goat cottage cheese or some other organic product that I do not make! Recently I got a request from a Natural Foods Distributor who wanted 15,000 pounds of organic goat cheese on a regular basis. 15,000 lbs is probably all I produce in a year so I couldn't help them. Maybe you can!

Thinking about why you want to become organic now will help you know what you want to accomplish on your dairy farms. And it can remind us all, when the going gets rough, why it is worth while for us to be Certified Organic.

For me being Certified Organic is the culmination of of my life's journey with goats. I once hiked with a young goat up the drainage of part of the Sacramento River in California. After many adventures we got to the river at dusk. I stood in awe at the beauty of the wide Sacramento placidly reflecting the sunset. My young goat immediately walked up to the river's shore, spread her front legs and lowered her head to drink like a baby deer. That experience drove into my heart the wish to find
a way to live in harmony with the natural world. That somehow thru the goats I could become a part of the land around me.

**How to Become Certified Organic**

There will be other speakers today giving the details of becoming certified. I would like to remind you that your animals must be under organic management for a year before they can be certified organic. You must feed 100% organic feed and use no prohibited substances for one year. Your pastures must be proven to not have had any prohibited substances on it for 3 years before it can be certified.

You need to provide your milking does access to pasture at all times. They need to be getting 120 days of feed or 30% of their nutrition from it.

If you are raising goats for meat they must be handled organically for the last trimester of their dam's pregnancy and can never have a prohibited substance used on them. If you buy a doe who has had a round of antibiotics, after one year of organic management she can be milked with your organic herd but she can never be certified organic for meat production.

As I talk more about goat dairying organically, remember that no one else can tell you what will work at your dairy. After following faithfully all we need to do to be certified, each of us has a different vision for our dairy. Each of us has different living conditions for our animals. We milk different breeds that have been managed in different ways. Use what you want of what I or anyone else suggests and leave the rest, always keeping within your organic guidelines.

It doesn't hurt to be skeptical until you see the results in your own herd.

I once heard about an experiment with cats who were raised, some on raw and some on pasteurized milk. For results we were told that after 3 generations the cats raised on pasteurized milk had all died, which was to convince us to use raw milk.

I count it one of the blessings of my life that I have all the raw goat milk I want to drink, but I know many goats who have been raised for far more than 3 generations on pasteurized milk and they are healthy and reproducing.

**What Is Certified Organic Management?**

Basically organic management is managing our animals so we use no prohibited substances. All our feed will be certified organic and we will throw away our antibiotics and commercial dewormers.

We need to educate ourselves and work closely with our certifiers. MAKE IT YOUR JOB TO KNOW ALL YOU CAN ABOUT WHAT IS EXPECTED by your certifier. LEARN TO ARTICULATE to your inspector WHAT YOU ARE DOING organically at your dairy. A great resource is the ATTRA ORGANIC LIVESTOCK HANDBOOK, which you can get at www.attra.org.
How Can We Manage an Organic Goat Herd Without the Non-organic Input We May Be Currently Using?

The first and perhaps most important thing we can do is HAVE SUPERBLY HEALTHY ANIMALS. We need to breed and cull for animals who thrive in the environment we provide them. Put your energy in to animals who are not always coming down with a sniffle or going off feed.

After I had my epiphany about living naturally with goats I started raising them in Northern California. Did I work at becoming "Natural", whatever that is or Organic? No, I just did what my goat mentors did. I and the many other young and beginning goat breeders, used antibiotics when ever we felt like it, and dry treated all the does in our herds, whether they had a mastitis problem or not. We were helping to the creation of antibiotic resistant super bacteria.

We dewormed on a schedule, never testing for an individual animal's worm load. We killed all the dung beetles in our area and once again helped with the development of super resistant parasites.

We pooled all our colostrum so every kid would have the benefit of the entire herd's antibodies. We thought we were doing the best thing for our animals and in some ways we were but we were also paving the way for the rapid spread of CAEV when it came on the scene. Situations change and we have to change with them.

Become Commercial Dairy Person Operators!

An important step in being commercial and organic is LEARNING TO CULL.

Don't keep an animal just because her mother was a permanent champion, or her grandmother was a beautiful color. We can't afford to keep an animal who isn't thrifty at our dairy.

When we have a health problem we are going to decide if we have a herd health problem or an individual animal's health problem

The doe who gets pneumonia may have been suffering from our poor management but if she is the only doe to get sick we also know she is not thriving under our management. Perhaps she needs to find a new home.

To have superbly healthy animals we have to LET IT BE OK THAT OUR ANIMALS WILL NEVER REACH THEIR FULL GENETIC POTENTIAL. We don't have to pour the grain into them to make top ten status over taxing their udder's and their metabolism. This has to do as much with the commercial production of milk as it does with Organic Production. We have to keep on top of the balance between feeding for a high test and feeding for thrifty production that makes us money!

To Be Certified Organic We Will Use Only Certified Organic Feed Including Our Pastures.

All feed you purchase must come with an organic certificate from the producer. This includes the Organic Certificate and a separate Products list telling just what is being certified. Make sure you have both. Look at the label of your salt mixes. Salt is not an item you have certified but you will need to make sure your mixes do not include any flavorings or non organic grains. Work with your Certifier.
To Be Certified Organic We Are Going to Stop Using Prohibited Substances
Medications and Dewormers

This can be upsetting. I took years to convert to organic. When I came to New Mexico and built my dairy I came to pristine land and brought contaminated goats. I had a lot to learn.

If you are converting right now what will you do without antibiotics?

Remember your first priority is to have

1) healthy animals,

2) cull constant offenders. I went out of my way to bring a doe with chronic mastitis to New Mexico. I spent untold hours messing with that goat, using penicillin and sulfa, infusing and fasting her as natural goat raisers suggested. I only tormented the doe and introduced mastitis into other does. I needed to cull. When you have a problem with your goats the first thing to do is find out if you really need antibiotics? Many times animals are treated because it is simpler to give a shot than to

3) decide if there really is a problem. I once had to pull a kid because it's head was turned back on it's body blocking the birth canal and it could not be born. I trimmed my fingernails and scrubbed up my hand and arm, then I reached into the doe to draw the head into the proper birthing position. Just when I got the head facing forward, it slipped away and I had to go in again, putting my arm all the way into the straining does body. This time I was able to help the doe push out the kid which was alive. It was a huge doe kid that had grown for so long with her head turned back it took about a week before she held it in the normal position. The mother was meanwhile just about in shock. She didn't get up and she wouldn't eat. This was before I was certified organic but I knew if she didn't have a fever, antibiotics wouldn't do her any good. It was five days before the doe eat much or came into her milk but after that she did just fine, and breed normally the next year. Maybe I was just lucky but I had to wait to see if antibiotics were really necessary and in this case they were not. In this case the doe had only started her hard labor and was still full of her own natural lubricant.

4) Find out what are the alternatives to antibiotics and other medicines now routinely used on conventional farms? We may need to look at the alternative medicines being used on people today, as well as consider what did people do 60 years ago before antibiotics? We do need to remember that just because something was used before the advent of antibiotics or is being used now as an alternative, that doesn't mean it is organic. Mercury used to be used to treat syphilis. I had a friend who took massive amounts of Chinese herbs for fertility only to find the high amount of estrogen in the herbs was feeding her then undetected breast cancer. Check out your options old and new.

Once I forgot to remove my summer salt mix from my pregnant does. This salt mix had extra calcium in it. That fall and winter I was also feeding an excellent alfalfa hay. After my doe, Exquisite, kidded, she got milk fever. She could not withdraw from her bones the calcium she needed to meet her rapidly increasing milk needs because she was used to having all her calcium supplied in her feed.

She went down and I had nothing to treat her with. Once again I was not organic at the time, I just had never had a case of milk fever before and was not prepared. If you have supplemental calcium to give a doe in this situation make sure it is not laced with non organic substances. Exquisite rapidly
went into a coma, and was laid out on her side with her eyes glazed over. My herd manager came into the pen and suggested I shoot her so we could bleed her and at least eat the meat. There seemed no way she could live. I remembered that in a James Herriot book, this old English Vet said that a treatment milk fever was filling the animals udder with air using a bicycle pump.

I didn't have a pump or any idea how I could have used one but I did have a cannula to infuse a teat and a 6 cc syringe. I cleaned off the does teat and pushed in 6 cc's of air. Then I took out the syringe and refilled it with air and pushed it in again. I kept doing this until one side of her udder was tight, then I did the same on the other side. I felt sick as I left her still and unresponsive in her pen. When I came back in 20 minutes Equisite was standing and alert. It was like a miracle. She came into her milk normally and I didn't have to treat her again.

5) But what will you do if you must use a prohibited substance on a doe. Under organic certification you can not just skip treating an animal so you can keep her in organic production. Right now consider where you will send animals who are given probated substances to save their life. Remember you don't want a marginally healthy animal in your herd anyway, and not many of us can afford to keep very many animals around and not producing for the year it takes to become organic again. Your certified will also not let you treat animals and hold them for a year as a management tool.

**What about Dewormers?**

How can a herd in a wet climate do without chemical dewormers? Currently parasite control is a worldwide problem. Already you know you have to alternated dewormers or the worms will more rapidly build up an immunity to whatever you use.

I live where it is so dry, parasites in my goats are not a problem. One way to control parasites would be to move to dryer area. You can investigate rotating your pastures.

Actually you are going to be on the cutting edge of a new era of parasites control whether you become organic or not because new alternatives will have to be found. Dewormers are becoming less effective.

You are lucky to have two parasite researchers in your area working on Small Ruminant parasite control. Their research into natural substances that parasites will not become resistant to will help you in your organic herd. They are Dr. Joan Burk (www.scsrpe.org) and Dr. Helen Swartz.

**Some Misc Management Problems**

If you are using milk replacer you will need to find a source that is organic. If you can't find a source for organic milk replacer you will need to give it up. You can give you kids milk from your certified herd or from someone Else's certified organic herd. Commercially purchased organic cow milk is a cheaper alternative for me than my own goat milk. I dislike using it because my goats milk is rich in CLA since they eat no grain. CLA is has beneficial health properties for kid goats and people. I use a combination of mother raising and hand raising. The kids at my dairy nurse their mothers and I also give them a bottle once a day so they will be tame and love me too.
Mother raising is essential for me because my range land is so rough the kids need their moms to keep an eye on them when the herd is browsing. The kids don't go with the herd until they are 3 months old.

I use weaning bits to stop the kids from nursing when they are 2 to 3 months old. This way kids and dams can be together and the kids learn what to eat and are a part of the herd and learn more about living with guardian dogs.

To control flies at the dairy I start early before my last frost and use fly predators throughout the season until after my first fall frost. I have used some predators that did not work. Keep trying until you have enough of the correct predators to control your fly problems. Traps are good here too, but I rely on the fly predators and chickens to scratch up problem areas.

**Organic Goat Cheese Making**

In your organic creamery you will want to use the best cheese making practices. To be organic you will need to only bring in certified organic products to use in your yogurt or cheese. I use herbs in my cheese so all those herbs are certified organic and I have Certification on the herb company I get them from.

Of special concern is veg enzyme rennet. You will need a letter stating the rennet is NOT genetically modified. I have been able to get GMO free rennet from Glengarry Cheesemaking and Dairy Supply (613-525-3133). Perhaps someone will be able to produce a Certified Organic animal rennet. Without certified organic rennet and cultures our cheeses will not be able to be called 100% Certified Organic but will be Certified Organic. (95% organic)

I hope I can be an encouragement to anyone who is interested in being Certified Organic. Let's give one another support. Maybe some of us can form an Organic Goat Co-op, to buy feed in bulk and apply for grants!!
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