

Topic of the Month

A2 Milk

Milk contains two major types of proteins—casein and whey. Within the beta-casein protein are two varieties known as A1 and A2.

Over the last few decades, research has been focused on potential health benefits of A2 beta-casein milk. There is some evidence that cases presumed to be lactose intolerance, which is a digestive issue related to the milk sugar lactose, are actually reactions to the A1 beta-casein protein in cow's milk. It is also thought that the A2 variety is more common in human milk. There is also some speculation that there may be health benefits pertaining to prevention of autoimmune diseases and Type 1 diabetes.

A2 milk has been a topic of interest in New Zealand at least since 2000. The A2 Corporation (later renamed The a2 Milk Company Limited) was founded to commercialize a genetic test to determine whether a cow could produce milk free of the A1 protein. In the last few years, this genetic testing has become more available and made it possible to determine whether cows and bulls carry genes for A1, A2, or both. Through testing and selective breeding, herds have been able to convert over entirely to cows producing milk containing only A2 beta-casein.

As more competitors to fluid milk emerge on the market, this is a niche that shows promise. Last year, the a2 Milk Company began expanding A2 milk sales at retailers in the US.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of February 28, 2020

Corn	\$3.66/bu
Soybean Meal	\$298.60/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$16.98/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$112.70/cwt

Practice News

- We have discontinued use of the answering service for after hours calls. Calls to the office phone outside of normal business hours will be forwarded to the phone of the veterinarian on call.

In The News

- Starbucks has announced plans to shift away from “animal-derived dairy”, believing it to be the major contributor to their carbon footprint.
- Recently, reports have been circulating of Democratic presidential hopeful Mike Bloomberg saying, “I could teach anybody[...]to be a farmer.” The statement was taken from a 2016 speaking engagement in which he was discussing technological advancements and using farming as an example. He references the 3,000 year development of agrarian society and the decrease in the number of people employed in agriculture. Nevertheless, even taken in the larger context, his comments underscore a major disconnect and lack of understanding and appreciation for both the technology and hard manual labor that have been hallmarks of the American farmer since there has been an American farmer.
- Stranger than Fiction: A Florida man has been charged with felony battery for scooping cow manure into a bucket and dumping it on the head of another person. Details were limited except that the man was previously convicted of battery. No motive was given.

Upcoming Events

- Penn State extension, in coordination with Somerset Trust, will be putting on a meeting for dairy producers on March 12 at the Berlin Fire Hall. The meeting will focus on opportunities in dairy. Fliers are available at the office. RSVP is by March 5.