

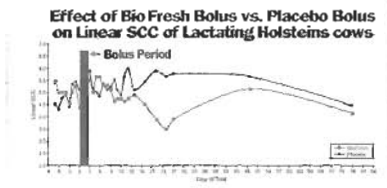
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## Milk Matters

a column by **Joseph O'Donnell**

# Milk helps the world go 'round

Once milk leaves the dairy, just where does it go? Typically, it ends up in a processing plant and becomes the bottled milk, cheese or butter you see in the supermarket.

These products are very familiar to most folks, but what about products beyond the familiar? Products like milk powder also start at the plant and they also need a home, but one not so obvious to you and me. After all, milk powder isn't a main staple on the traditional grocery store shelf. The same can be said for other nontypical dairy products like whey protein, lactose, buttermilk solids and the like. Or are they?

Walk down the aisles of your local market — if you look at ingredient labels for your favorite baked goods, cereals and snacks, you'll see where the rest of those products end up. You'll see them in confections and even processed meats. A large percentage of milk solids end up in the lucrative ingredients market.

Ingredients aren't the only place milk powders and other dried dairy products find their niche. As the name "dried" and/or "powder" implies, these products contain very little water and therefore are easily shipped nationally and internationally. In fact, milk powder — both whole and skim — is the dairy product most traded internationally. It makes sense because it can be reconstituted to extend a local milk supply or bring milk to an area where there is no local supply. It also can be sold to consumers as fluid milk or used as an ingredient, depending on the situation.

In addition to contributing to global nutrition, shipping milk powder around also helps to balance plant activity. There are some areas of the United States and the world where seasonal shifts affect milk production. Rather than leaving plants dry during these seasons, milk powder can be brought in so local manufacturing and local commerce can continue. While this is just a matter of doing good business, it ties back to consumer demand for dairy products which, in turn, goes back to the growing message about dairy and health.

Dairy products are made and used the world over — from milk to cheese to ingredients like milk powder. As scientists around the world continue to discover the health benefits associated with dairy products, the demand will grow. Local manufacturing must buy raw materials, such as milk and whey powder or similar products, to keep up with this demand. The result? A healthy dairy economy and a healthy global population.

Focusing closer to home — one of the biggest benefits the dairy industry in the United States has going for it today is its role in weight management. With obesity and diabetes at the forefront in consumer minds, what food

### FYI

■ **Dr. Joseph O'Donnell is executive director of the California Dairy Research Foundation. He can be reached at 530-753-0681.**

■ **Information on the California Dairy Research Foundation can be obtained from the organization's web site at [www.cdrf.org](http://www.cdrf.org).**

manufacturer wouldn't want to include dairy as an ingredient in their retail or foodservice product AND advertise the fact?

This is just the beginning. Nature designed every protein, carbohydrate, fat, mineral and vitamin in milk to be part of a health and nutrition delivery system for mammals. No other substance in the world is designed this way. Global research is discovering new information about milk's benefits everyday. With today's technology, we are learning how to manipulate this product to deliver maximum health. We still need more clinical work to prove effectiveness but that will come as producers, manufacturers and the government work together to leverage support for this work.

The implications of unlocking the secrets of milk components and how they deliver health are enormous. We will be able to identify and produce very specific benefits to address very specific consumer needs. More than ever, dairy producers could be linked directly to the consumer. It all starts with the raw milk composition. By changing milk's composition to increase the level of high market value components, the producer can deliver a raw material that greatly expands product developers' ability to deliver new consumer products with desired benefits.

Early on, our primitive ancestors recognized the nutritional value of milk. They didn't need magazine articles or special studies to define nutrition — they just ate the foods that kept them healthy, period. It was clear to them that life improved when they consumed milk and they took the necessary steps — securing supply through domesticating animals, producing fermented products like yogurt and cheese — to keep it part of their diet. The basic approach was no different than today. Changing the raw material composition changes what you can do with it. If you can control the composition, you influence product development and take control over your market. All the while, you are expanding the delivery of health benefits to consumers and making the world a better place.

It all comes down to milk. The dairy producer checkoff program works with processors to build the scientific database proving milk components' value in delivering nutrition and health. This kind of visionary thinking and action ensures not only the dairy industry's health, but also American consumers' health and individuals' health beyond our borders. ■

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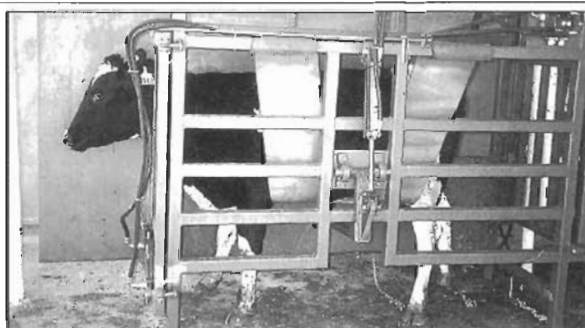
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