

President's Letter
Al Squire
November, 2015

After seeing some pictures of the Jersey Cow Classes at World Dairy Expo, I was amazed at how extremely sharp and angular the show cows were. They exhibited the epitome of “dairy character.” The cows looked thin to me. We dairymen all know that a good cow will “milk off” several hundred pounds early in her lactation.

I often tell people who do not understand cows that a cow is like a bank account. During her late lactation and her dry period, she is saving up body condition to be able to meet the tremendous energy needs she will have after she has calved and begins to lactate. For her first two to three months after calving, she cannot eat enough to maintain her body weight, so she uses a couple hundred pounds of stored fat and muscle as energy to enable her to produce the tremendous amount of milk she is genetically programmed to secrete. Once she is able to increase her feed intake sufficiently and her milk production begins to decline, she starts to refill her body “bank account” and gain back her weight so she can start the whole process over again. The dairy cow is a “smart” cow. Her body “knows” that it is impossible to raise a calf or produce milk if there is no “money in the bank” or weight stored in reserve, therefore she is usually unable to get pregnant until she begins gaining weight again.

I am naturally drawn to making comparisons to our own situation as dairymen. Our dairies are also like bank accounts. Like our cows, we try to save up our resources for the future and pay down debt when times are good and when we can afford to do so. Unfortunately, our New Mexico dairies have had to endure prolonged stretches of time where high feed costs and inadequate milk prices have teamed up to drain our bank accounts. Respite from this situation have been too few, too short and way too far in between. As a result, the previously vibrant and growing New Mexico Dairy Industry has stopped expanding and is in danger of even further shrinkage at the present time.

I also draw a connection between the thin cow’s body condition and the bank account of our country. No resources were set aside or placed in reserve during good times and now there is nothing left for us to fall back on. Government growth has been rampant and deficit spending has been out of control for a very long time. We have no reserves. Borrowing has taken place at rates that are unfathomable and unsustainable.

It doesn’t matter whether you are talking about milk or about dollars. Our cows, our dairies, and our country will not be able to perform well and maintain strength if they continue to be subjected to conditions of sustained deficit spending and depletion of resources. The return of the conditions needed for positive energy balance to take place once again can’t come too soon!