

A glut of lies

By Trent Loos

I wanted to start off by admitting that I am a dairyman wanna-be. I have never owned a dairy cow but have worked closer with the dairy industry than any other facet of agriculture in the past five years. I have some tremendous friends who are dairymen and women. Honestly, however, I do believe it is time to stop with the gloom and doom attitude and fix the problem. I am sick and tired of reading article after article that includes the word “glut” in it. We do not have a glut of dairy cows. We do not produce nearly enough milk in this country to meet the nutritional needs of 306 million Americans. We have an under-consumption problem.



“Got Milk” is, without a doubt, one of the most recognized slogans in the country and particularly in agriculture but apparently it is no longer translating into more milk consumption. According to the USDA, in 1909 the per capita consumption of fluid milk was 34 gallons a year. Most interestingly, upon the advent of fortifying milk by adding Vitamin D to curb the growing incidence of rickets, per capita milk consumption increased to it’s peak of 45 gallons annually. Today, that number is just over 20 gallons per person per year. Incidentally, in 1945 all fluid milk was consumed as whole milk and today only 8 gallons of whole milk are consumed per person.

To make matters worse, the dairy industry collects \$250 million in check-off money that are supposed to be used to increase dairy consumption. As a result of that nice annual budget, we can find study after study documenting that 80% of females in the United States are calcium deficient as are over half of all American males. We find similar numbers for deficiencies in Vitamin D, which is readily available in milk.

Instead of paying celebrities to paint on milk mustaches, we should be driving home the nutritional message to every parent in this country. If you are not demanding that your kid drink at least one glass of milk every single day, you are a neglectful parent. Instead of drinking nutrient-rich fluid milk, kids drink soft drinks and juices. Orange juice is nutritious and tasty but honestly the orange juice folks have stolen milk’s true place as the perfect breakfast beverage. Milk offers so much more including what was found in a recent study that consuming milk for breakfast leads to the consumption of 9% fewer calories throughout the rest of the morning because the milk proteins provide a fullness feeling that lasts longer.

The Baltimore Sun recently reported on soft drink consumption by saying:

Carbonated soft drinks (sometimes nicknamed "osteoporosis in a can") can promote osteoporosis. The carbonation irritates the stomach by moving calcium - a natural antacid - from the blood into the stomach. The blood, now low on calcium, replenishes its supply from the bones to protect muscular and brain function (both of which heavily depend on calcium). In addition, phosphoric acid in some soft drinks interferes with calcium absorption.

By now you are screaming at this piece of paper saying, "What about the Cinderella of the dairy industry – cheese?" Americans now consume over 32.48 lbs of cheese annually, which is 8 times more than we did in 1909 and double what we did in 1975. Yes, the consumption of cheese has made up some of the deficit we have seen in fluid milk consumption, but please take note of recent USDA reports indicating that we have lost ground in that category as well.

Whole milk is the basis for healthy living and should be consumed by everyone, everyday. I believe the only reason we have lactose intolerant people is because they were not introduced to milk properly as infants. We need to lose the stigma that dairy products are high in fat and that fat is bad. The fat from dairy is typically that of the Omega-3 fatty acid that is touted in olive oil as being a heart healthy fat.

Two years ago news came out about dairy products assisting with weight loss. "If you compare a dairy-rich versus a dairy-poor diet you can nearly double the rate of weight and fat loss with the same level of calorie restriction," says researcher Michael Zemel, PhD, professor of nutrition and medicine at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

More recent research indicates that chocolate milk is better for athletes than sports drinks after physical exercise because it helps rebuild muscle tissue that was lost during a workout.

I really don't believe we have a glut of milk at this point in time. I simply believe we have not spent all of our check-off money in a wise manner and we have allowed the non-dairy folks to erode the health of the public at the expense of the dairymen. I suggest that it is time to grab the reins and get this runaway horse headed in the right direction because, quite honestly, no other agricultural industry has a better story to tell about improving human lives than the dairy people – we just need to get the truth out and let it work in our favor. What parent doesn't want healthy kids? What athlete doesn't want to stay lean and rebuild muscle mass? What person in our overweight society couldn't benefit from reducing their caloric intake while building critical bone density? Those well-documented, scientific facts are our best tools against the lies that are really the true glut of this industry.

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