

What does the public think of you?

The image of agriculture is changing from idyllic to corporate. What's that mean to your dairy business?

By Lee Telega

What face appears in Joyce Q. Public's mind when she hears the words "dairy farmers?" Does she picture hard-working, honorable, salt-of-the-earth people making an honest living by caring for their animals and their land? Or does the public picture a hard-driving, monopolizing, animal-abusing capitalist who is laying waste to the countryside.

Everyone who is involved in the dairy business hopes that most people have a positive picture of their career and practices. For now that may be the case. But keeping public opinion positive is going to be – if it's not already – a challenge for every dairy producer.

Dairying, like all of agriculture, is chang-

ing. And because the pace of change is so rapid, the public's knowledge of dairy farms is probably distorted. The majority of people still have images of grandpa's or great-grandpa's farm. So when the realities of modern day dairying – liquid manure, freestall barns, heavy equipment – come face-to-face with the public, there's surprise and, sometimes, shock, anger and backlash.

As if you don't already have enough on your business plate, you need to add a public image campaign. In this month's *The Manager*, PRO-DAIRY specialists and others present articles on conflict-causing situations and, more importantly, ideas on how to live compatibly with nonfarmers around you. ■



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What is the public image of your dairy business? If it's a bit tarnished, what can you do to shine it up? If it's good, how will you maintain that image?

June 2003

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The Manager, a special section prepared by PRO-DAIRY specialists, appears in *Northeast DairyBusiness* six times a year. In keeping with the PRO-DAIRY mission, *The Manager* helps strengthen the management skills of Northeast dairy producers and increase the profitability of the Northeast dairy industry. PRO-DAIRY, an educational program begun in 1988, is a joint venture of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Northeast agriservice organizations. For reprints of PRO-DAIRY's *The Manager*, contact Robin Huzinga, 272 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Phone: (607) 255-4478. E-mail: rmh14@cornell.edu

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