

Dairy Info Day 2019 Advisory Board Report

The primary reason for the Advisory Board's existence is to foster a partnership between the Saskatchewan dairy industry and the University of Saskatchewan. The members of the SaskMilk predecessor (Dairy Farmers of Saskatchewan) voted overwhelmingly to support the creation of the Rayner Centre by contributing milk quota for the university to use. The value of that quota now is well in excess of \$5M. The very difficult task of writing an agreement between the dairy industry and university was given to Bernard Laarveld and myself. We had to write an agreement that was essentially an "evergreen" agreement that could only be broken if the university failed to meet their end of the agreement. Because of this, we needed to put in place safeguards to protect industry, hence the Advisory Board.

Up until December 31, 2018, APS had two full time faculty positions dedicated to dairy, representing two areas of expertise (nutrition and physiology). Two other faculty and one researcher perform dairy research in part (typically 20-30%) in the areas of rumen physiology and feed development. Bernard Laarveld now has retired and we need that position (physiology) filled promptly.

As part of the original agreement the University of Saskatchewan agreed to create an extension position pending availability of funding. This never happened but I am very pleased to report that SaskMilk decided to go ahead and create this position. This person will have their office in the Rayner Centre and will be available to address any issues, concerns, or questions that any of our members might have.

It takes a great deal of time and energy to serve on the Advisory Board and it is difficult to juggle this with other obligations. The Advisory Board industry representatives do not necessarily have to come from the SaskMilk board of directors. SaskMilk directors are extensively involved with other more pressing issues such as international trade deals, DFC, processor issues, etc. Therefore it is possible to call upon members at large to serve on the Advisory Board. As a further safe guard for industry, every project using funds from the quota rental agreement must be approved by the SaskMilk board.

When I started down this path for the creation of this partnership and eventually the building of the Rayner Centre, I had no idea that it would be so involved and take so long. There are some amongst us who are skeptical about the value of research, but many producers use the results of research without realizing that they are benefitting from research that was done many years ago and which now has become the accepted norm.

For example, barely 40 years ago I had the opportunity to work in a herd that was in the top 10 producing herds in the province, when there were close to 4000 milk and cream producers in Saskatchewan. This herd had a herd average of 22 litres/day of 3.7% butterfat milk. According to Dave Christensen's latest numbers, our provincial herd average is now 33 litres per day of 4.2% butterfat milk!

SaskMilk has always been very keen to support basic research projects along with applied projects. The difference is that an applied project can be incorporated onto our farms and we can expect positive results fairly quickly. Basic research is much slower to come to fruition. The hoof wart project where we are attempting to create a vaccine for this terrible disease is an example. The best example of basic research that all farmers can understand is the creation of Canola. Canada is the world's largest exporter of this crop and it is by far Saskatchewan's leading dollar generator in agriculture. Some new crops that are being developed are carinata and camelina. Tim Mutsvangwa is doing extensive meal research on both crops. One of these new crops is being developed to replace some of the fossil jet fuel with bio jet fuel. For this to be cost effective, the by-product meal must be able to extract its true value from the livestock industry which is what Tim's projects are working on and trying to determine what the good properties of these meals are.

In closing I would like to thank Bernard Laarveld for all the hard work, time and frustration that you have given the dairy industry and good luck in your much deserved retirement!

Thank you,

Jack Ford