



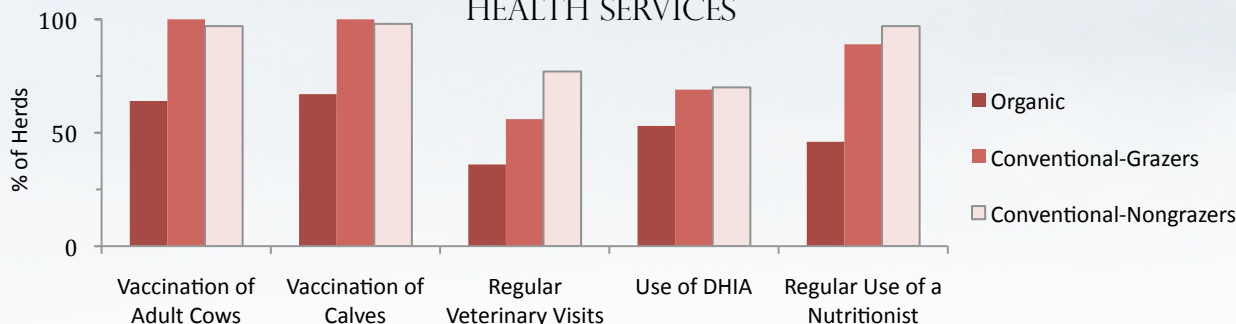
NO VETERINARIAN? COULD MEAN HIGHER SOMATIC CELL COUNTS FOR YOUR ORGANIC DAIRY HERD

Preventative disease management practices are important on any dairy farm, but especially organically managed farms, as the availability of USDA-approved products to treat disease is limited. Vaccinations are allowable by national organic standards and are generally considered effective

methods to prevent various diseases in cattle.¹

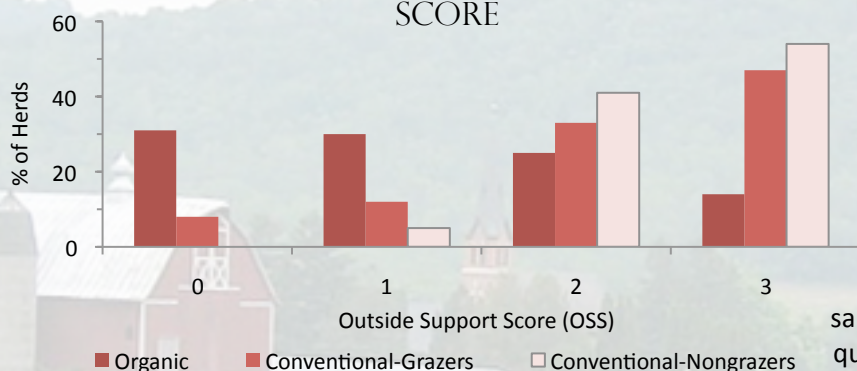
However, according to a recent study on the assessment of health, management and herd characteristics of organic and similarly sized conventional dairy herds across the U.S.², organic dairy producers were less likely to utilize vaccines in comparison to conventional-grazing and nongrazing farms.

HERDS REPORTING USE OF VACCINATION AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH SERVICES



The study also considered the use of off-farm resources as preventative disease management tools and their effect on herd health. Regular veterinary visits, use of a nutritionist and use of DHIA were variables used to calculate a farm's Outside Support Score (OSS). Each farm was given a point for each of the services used, with a minimum score of 0 (no outside help

PERCENTAGE OF HERDS BY OUTSIDE SUPPORT SCORE



from any of the given sources) to 3 (utilization of regular veterinary visits, DHIA and a nutritionist). Results showed that conventional-grazing and nongrazing farms were more likely to score a 2 or 3, whereas organic farms were more likely to score a 0 or 1.

Researchers found OSS to be associated with certain herd health indicators, such as average reported somatic cell count (SCC) found in bulk milk samples. SCC is diagnostically used to investigate milk quality problems and predict intramammary mastitis infections—considered the most costly disease of dairy

cattle because of its long-term effects on decreased total milk yields and increased culling rates. Results showed that dairy farmers who were less likely to utilize outside support (an OSS of 0 or 1) reported overall *higher* SCC with greater risk of mastitis.

More research on the use of vaccines and other preventative measures in organic dairy farming would be of value, with a particular need for socio-economic research on the reasons for non-adoption of these common preventative practices in the organic community.

AVERAGE REPORTED SCC BY OUTSIDE SUPPORT SCORE



¹ LeBlanc, S.J., K.D. Lissersmore, D.F. Kelton, T.F. Duffield and K.E. Leslie. 2006. Major advances in disease prevention in dairy cattle. J. Dairy Sci. 89: 1267-1279.

² K.E. Stiglbauer, K.M. Cicconi-Hogan, R. Richert, Y.H. Schukken, P.L. Ruegg, and M. Gamroth. 2013. Assessment of herd management on organic and conventional dairy farms in the United States. J. Dairy Sci. 96:1290-1300.