

# Texas Dairy Matters

*Higher Education Supporting the Industry*

---

## NEIGHBOR RELATIONS

Ellen R. Jordan, Ph.D.  
Extension Dairy Specialist  
Department of Animal Science  
Texas &M AgriLife Extension Service  
The Texas A&M University System

Today more than ever, producers are apt to have neighbors who do not know or understand dairy farming. Dairy producers here and across the nation have had lawsuits filed against them as a result. Spending some time and effort to build neighbor relations may not eliminate friction between neighbors, but it can certainly help.

The very first thing to do is get to know your neighbors. When someone new moves in, introduce yourself and explain a little about your operation. Invite them over for a tour. If you have implemented biosecurity measures to limit the potential for outside visitors to accidentally bring disease onto your farm, explain this. Everyone today is aware of heightened security

Leave your business card with a number and encourage them to call you with any questions or concerns they might have. Don't think that if they don't know you, they won't complain.

If your neighbor has a complaint wouldn't you rather he asked you to fix the problem rather than going to a regulatory agency. It is far easier to complain about someone that you perceive as an anonymous big business owner, rather than the guy who came over to introduced himself and made you feel welcome to the neighborhood.

Next practice best management practices every day. This should be occurring anyway, but if you have a new neighbor, you might let them know that you will attempt to spread manure only on days that the wind won't carry odor to his place.

Ask neighbors to give you a call if they have any special events planned so you can avoid spreading manure on those days. And of course, remember that holidays such as Memorial Day and Fourth of July are prime time for outdoor activities, so avoid agitating lagoons or spreading manure on those days. Being considerate goes a long way in minimizing complaints.

At least once a year, conduct a farm audit to make sure that your nutrient management plan still is right for your dairy. If you've increased cow numbers, decide if you need to increase your lagoon. Drive around the perimeter of your farm and look for anything that might attract attention.

Have regular farm clean-up days where you make sure you have all the string, buckets, paper, plastic etc. picked up and everything mowed and trimmed. When everything looks neat and tidy this projects an "I care" image.

Another thing is to keep good records. Write down what you did, when and where.

These records come in handy when determining if something you did on your farm was the cause of a complaint and records may help identify solutions.

Spending time building neighbor relations may not prevent all friction, but it certainly has helped keep some situations from escalating.

<http://texasdairymatters.org>

October, 2005

---

*The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.*

*The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas  
Cooperating*