

CALIFORNIA ALFALFA & FORAGE ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

The California Alfalfa and Forage Association (CAFA) was formed as a volunteer organization in 1998 to act as a voice for California alfalfa growers. Its origins began with the 1997 California Alfalfa Symposium when grower Jim Kuhn described the need for educational and research efforts to serve many of the needs of the industry. We were particularly interested in the area of water, pesticides, and general public perception. Although still in its fledgling phase, CAFA has initiated projects in the area of pest management, publicizing the benefits of alfalfa, and has maintained a newsletter in cooperation with the UC Alfalfa Workgroup. CAFA has already been able to act on behalf of its membership in issues such as weed-free forage, defending growers arrested for baling at night, pesticide regulation, and Section-18 emergency approvals. What was a dream two years ago is now a reality with over 300 members, an active board, and projects underway. We call upon all numbers of California's \$1 billion alfalfa industry to support your forage association!

Key words: Organizations, pesticides, weed-free forage, pesticide regulation, Section 18, wildlife

THE FIRST YEAR

This first year for the California Alfalfa and Forage Association was certainly eventful! We held our first board meeting in January the night before the California Farm Bureau's Hay Commodity Committee meeting. Officers were elected for the 1999 years as follows: Tom Ellis, Grimes grower, President; Jim Kuhn, Imperial Valley grower, Vice President; Dan Putnam, UC Extension Forage Specialist, Secretary; and Joe Rominger, Winters grower, Treasurer. We set a goal of 500 members by the end of 1999. Currently, we have 315 members.

Early in the year, Executive Director Stacey Roberts began working with the Alfalfa Pesticide Task force and the Department of Pesticide Regulation in an effort to address the issue of pesticide use and regulation. As a result of these efforts, CAFA received a grant of \$5,000. Stacey was also working on another larger grant in April, but was unable to complete it because she was hired away to take a position in the rice industry.

Prior to leaving CAFA, Stacey had completed a rough draft of a pamphlet about the benefits of alfalfa to the environment and California's economy. This needs to be completed and will be a priority in 2000.

Since we were suddenly without an Executive Director, our projects were put on hold and a search for a replacement was initiated. The job description was completed last summer and

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interviews were conducted in September. We had several good candidates apply and are currently finalizing contract negotiations and hope to have the position filled by December. In the interim, we contracted with the California Crop Improvement Association to provide us with clerical assistance for the day to day operations of CAFA.

WEED-FREE FORAGE

In addition to the Executive Director's activities, last spring and summer we participated in various Extension Service Field Days throughout the state promoting our organization. We also participated in the Weed Free Forage meetings which were held as a result of the Presidential Executive Order requiring that all forage and straw that goes into National Parks or onto Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Lands must be certified weed free by the year 2000. The amount of hay involved at this time is minimal, but the straw industry will be affected significantly.

CALIFORNIA ALFALFA & FORAGE REVIEW

We are sponsoring and cooperating with the Alfalfa Workgroup in producing the California Alfalfa and Forage Review, the quarterly newsletter members receive as a benefit of membership. A general mailing to nearly 5,000 persons was made for the first three issues but only CAFA members and persons who subscribed directly received the summer and fall issues. I think everyone has appreciated the newsletters and have found the articles pertinent and useful. The CAFA insert in the newsletter contains information relating directly to CAFA and will include a profile of one of our members in each issue.

EMERGING PESTICIDE ISSUES

At the urging of Dan Putnam and Jesse Richardson (one of the industry members of our Board), we are going to get some growers to meet with regulators on pest issues in alfalfa. Ground water contamination and surface runoff are of utmost concern and it is felt that grower input at these meetings would be helpful. We are quite vulnerable to ongoing regulations on these issues, and CAFA will work to be in front on these issues.

Another issue we have been working on is response plans for suddenly emerging events. Mel Coelho, our other industry Board member, and Jesse Richardson have encourages us to address this issue. It is felt that training on how to respond to media questioning at the scene of a catastrophic incident would be beneficial. We even think it might be good as a future Symposium subject.

CAFA AIDS GROWER ARRESTED FOR BALING HAY

In July, there was an arrest incident in Riverside County where the County Sheriff arrested a man for baling hay at night. The charge cited was disturbing the peace. Don Bean, Board member from that area, brought the incident to our attention. The result was several letters and faxed messages we sent calling for the charges to be dropped and apologies made by the District Attorney involved. As a result, the arrested man was absolved completely.

AIDING IN SECTION 18 EFFORT

In September, we were asked by one of our members to help with obtaining a Section 18 emergency approval for the use of zinc phosphide in the control of meadow voles. We have sent letters of support to concerned parties for the approval of the Section 18 for zinc phosphide and the re-registration of the chemical. We have enlisted the support of the California Farm Bureau in this effort. The final decisions have not yet been made on this issue.

ELECTIONS

This fall, we had our first official election for members of our Board of Directors. Nominating committees were appointed and performed their duty. The results of this election will be announced at our 2nd Annual Meeting to be held in conjunction with Alfalfa Symposium.

CAFA — A BRIGHT FUTURE

Two years ago at the Symposium in Visalia, this organization was just a dream. Today we have over 300 members and, with our new Executive Director on board, , we have a bright and busy future ahead. The support of our members has been the basis of our success to date. We need that to continue and must expand our membership so we can become a vibrant force on behalf of our industry. For information on becoming a member, contact the California Alfalfa and Forage Association, PO Box 162, Davis, CA, 95617-0162.