

February 12'2021

Technical Review Committee

Manitoba Municipal Government

604-800 Portage avenue

Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4

Re: Rising Hope Dairy Inc Application

To whom it may concern:

We are sending this letter to respond to some of the concerns that were addressed in some of the letters sent to you regarding Rising Hope Dairy's application for manure units. First, we have a big thankyou to say to council for allowing us to submit our request and being willing to take the time and study the technical review and seriously consider the application. In response to each of these letters, we would like to say that we respect the concerns you voiced and appreciate your concern for the impact on our community and the world in general. In the same way as they say it takes a community to raise a child, we also realize it takes a community to produce our food supply. We realize that basically every household in our community consumes milk and meat products and therefore chances are that a portion of it comes right from this farm. We realize it is a community effort and take note of so much of the local community that contributes. We acknowledge the many local youth and full-time staff that have chosen to invest their time energy and effort to produce milk. We also appreciate the local businesses that have contributed, trucking companies, gas stations, credit union, equipment support teams, fix-it garages, manure management, and the list goes on. We feel that we have had a good standing in our community, and rarely have been approached personally or by phone about a complaint. We appreciate the support we have had in this farming community, and many of our neighbors are excited with us when it is time to harvest and enjoy watching the machinery and feel a part of the experience. Some of the letters were surprising to read, and we would encourage each of you, that when you do have a concern to approach us directly. When our community gives us immediate input, we can make every effort to improve our farm practices when something goes amiss.

Our farm is managed and owned by 3 families who have been born and raised on the farm here in the Landmark area. Currently we have 10 children that are growing up on the farm. We make every effort to be conscientious in our practices and to work hard and take pride in a job well done. These are the lessons and principles we want to instill in our children. As farmers, we feel we have a very close relationship with the land and are very dependent on the God who brings the sunshine and rain. It is our family's heritage and our children's future. Together with that, "All of the world's population, despite all it's education, and sophistication and it's many accomplishments, owes it whole existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains." (unknown author). Not only your future, but OUR future is completely dependent on our own management of our soil and is also dictated everyday by the weather and the God who controls it. Maintaining a healthy and robust soil composition, is important to us, and to the future of our next generation.

A large part of applying for this expansion is looking to the future. Our current milking parlor there is old and outdated and will need a replacement there in the next 5 yrs or so. We also have the next generation coming up and eager to farm. Together with that, the community is growing and the demand for milk products in Manitoba is growing. The costs of building a new parlor are exorbitant and prohibitive and when building one, you must consider that it is a 20yr investment. Seeking to be good conscientious operators, we would expect to invest in all the latest water saving technologies on the market, the current recommendations in manure handling, and the latest technologies in cow

comfort and cow handling, together with automation that allows for maximum comfort and ergonomics for the operator. To do this, we need to consider the future to justify the cost. We are putting forth a 20yr growth plan.

We want to seek to respectfully respond to some of the issues raised.

1. In response to questions about growth.

Approximately 6 years ago, the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, (DFM), chose to take milk quality very seriously and linked the capability of the farm to expand, to the quality of milk it produced. The DFM has classified all farms in a Gold, Merit, Standard, or Infraction status based on their milk quality. To obtain Gold status, farms must have been free of any antibiotic residue, and have extremely low bacteria counts for 12 consecutive months. The DFM has limited expansion to any farm that has not fallen within the Gold Status. The Merit and Standard farms are only allowed to expand by small increments. Although this had a huge outcry from the Dairy Farming Community, we feel that the DFM made a critical decision in ensuring that the milk produced in Manitoba would have superior quality. We have always qualified for the milk quality bonus and have placed among the highest ranked farms in regards to milk quality. **We are confident that we are producing top quality milk and also confident in the DFM by the leadership it has shown by setting these parameters and allowing only top quality producers the biggest opportunity to purchase quota.**

We also feel very confident in the Canadian Quality Milk Program, (CQM) requirements. CQM plays an important role in monitoring food safety and the risks on farms. They have stringent protocol that monitors for:

- Any antibiotic residue on the farm
- The use of any medicines and chemicals
- Assessing water safety, aquifer contamination, and water usage
- Quality and safe meat products
- Milk cooling and storage
- Sanitation of all milking equipment
- Safe operating procedures

As dairy farmers, we answer to the CQM, and have regular inspections and must file regular paperwork that shows daily monitoring of all of the above. Failure to comply could result in large fines and the right to ship milk being taken away.

2. In response to potential aquifer contamination.

We trust that the Technical Review and Manitoba Conservation is qualified to make sure that soil types, manure amounts, and application, etc. meet all required specifications. **This is where they specialize.** We also do not want aquifer contamination. We drink the water, our neighbors drink the water, and so do all our cows. We want clean water for all of us. It is interesting to note that Dairy Farmers of Manitoba and the Canadian Milk Quality Program require yearly water testing. Together with that, Manitoba Conservation requires yearly testing of our lagoon test wells that surround it.

3. In response to traffic issues.

We understand people's concerns when it comes to adherence to traffic laws. We have avid joggers, and children who love to ride their bikes. We know all too well what it means when someone does not slow down or does not stop at a stop sign. We know that we have failed in some situations, and we have tried to make improvements. Every year we meet with our shop crew, and speak of the importance of slowing down for pedestrians, stopping at stop signs, adhering to speed limits etc. They are advertising our farm by how they

drive. I believe we have made huge progress in this area, but because we are not on each and every truck, we don't always know what is happening. When we have been approached by neighbors, we have expressed our appreciation in them letting us know and have sought to improve the situation. Please make us aware promptly when these things happen, so that they can be dealt with the specific driver accordingly.

Regarding truck traffic, we submit to our local authorities and our municipalities guidelines. We have every intention of submitting to their oversight and guidance. We have trucks on the road like other local businesses and farms, and similar to the municipality trucks that haul gravel. In any farming community with agricultural zoned land, it is normal to have a certain amount of truck traffic.

4. In response to Manure Management.

The responsible application of manure to our fields does in fact do amazing things for our soil composition that is way beyond what chemical fertilizers can do. When you treat your "land" as one of your most important commodities, the application of manure is seen as a "soil builder" and is in fact thinking towards the future. The use of manure replaces our need to purchase a lot of fertilizer, (N, P, K) which is a further incentive to treat it as the valuable resource that it is. When best management practices are followed with timely manure application, in comparison to other conventional fertilizer, manure properly applied has the potential to provide these environmental benefits:

- Increased soil carbon and reduced atmospheric carbon levels
- Reduced soil erosion and runoff
- Reduced nitrate leaching
- Reduced energy demands for natural gas-intensive nitrogen(N) fertilizers

(Source: <https://lpeic.org/environmental-benefits-of-manure-application/>)

Some things that our community might not be aware of are the regulations and parameters that are currently in place for a farm over 300 animal waste units. We have every confidence that Manitoba Conservation is doing a very good job of keeping farmers accountable regarding manure application. We are required to do yearly soil sampling of any fields which will receive manure and submit to Manitoba Conservation before manure application. The following year Manitoba Conservation has a soil testing audit program where they randomly audit some fields in a Manure management plan to ensure compliance to their standards.

Manitoba Conservation plays a huge role in this technical review ensuring that we have enough land for the manure units applied for. They also test each field that we submit to ensure that they have room in their soil test for the application of the manure in the future. Conservation also considers the soil type, and water systems in the area before allowing or approving any application. Our relationship with Manitoba Conservation and our compliance to their standards is critical to the future growth of our farm, and without submission to their standards, growth would not be allowed.

Over the years we have sought to be community friendly with our operation by investing in manure pumping equipment to get our tractors, and manure wagons off the road. We pump all liquids to the field with a dragline, which results in no damage to the roads, or leakage there. All manure is incorporated into the soil with an aerator we pull behind the dragline. We have also made every effort to cultivate within 48hrs of application to get the manure into the soil and mitigate the smell.

Approximately 7yrs ago we hired Agra-Gold to do all our manure management, soil testing, and to give us the professional advice and the experience we need to be the best stewards of our land possible. Upon his advice, 1.5 years ago we took a huge step in our manure pumping technology with the expensive purchase of a manure

NIR sensor, (Near Infrared Spectrometer). This is a manure constituent sensing monitor which measures the nutrients in the manure as you are applying. This technology allows us to adjust our manure flow rates while we are applying based on the manure it is testing as it comes through the monitor. This ensures even application, and in the future might allow targeted application to specific nutrient deficiencies etc. in the field. We are proud to say that we were among the first manure applicators in Manitoba to use this new technology and Agra-Gold has been testing it on our farm. All our manure application is also recorded with GPS, (Global Positioning System), data and the GPS map of our manure application sent in with our report to Manitoba Conservation. This GPS report allows Manitoba Conservation to clearly see if we have adhered to the manure setbacks and regulations. There are no secrets there.

In this area where our farm is located, we are fortunate that we have a very good base of clay that prevents water contamination and nutrient leakage into the ground water.

5. In response to flies.

The last two years of hot dry summers have resulted in a perfect situation for the flies. Similar to the mosquitos liking a wet summer, the flies love it hot and dry. This past summer we applied a few times an environmentally friendly fly control with aerial spraying to all our manure windrows, and to this farm site with great success. There was a noticeable difference on the farm the weeks following application, and please note that it is also important to us for our own cow comfort to keep the flies at bay. We were very pleased with the results of this trial. Although we cannot control what the neighboring yard sites, disposal sites, and farms around us have done, we feel we did a good job controlling our own flies.

6. Regarding odour.

We live in an agricultural community, and in agricultural zoned land, and with that there come odors. That being said, dairy manure has a crust that forms on the top of our lagoon which is very thick, and does a good job minimizing odor. There is a good possibility that what you are smelling is not from our farm. Till we break up the crust for pumping manure, the smell is very minimal. Together with this, we use microbes that we add to the manure monthly to minimize smell and to break down some of the nutrients to get them ready for the soil. We are also thankful that this farm is located with very few neighbors in close proximity. Since the purchase of the farm there, we have also planted over 800 trees there into shelterbelts to prevent the smell.

Currently we pump twice a year in the spring and in the fall. With the approval of this application, one of the first items we would tackle is increasing our lagoon size so that it would allow us to only pump once a year. Our manure pumping crew, (led by Paul), does make every effort to pump 24hrs/day once the pumps start up to have the least impact possible on the surrounding neighbors. The Rising Hope lagoon takes us less than a week to pump. Together with the aerator we pull to incorporate the manure and our prompt cultivating within 48hrs of application, we feel we are doing a very good job of controlling the odor in the community.

7. In response to traffic on River Road.

We would just like to state that we have one field on the corner of River Road and road 30E on which we are currently hauling solid waste. This field is mostly accessed from road 30E. I believe that some of the traffic you are seeing there is from a different farmer, (unassociated to us), hauling solids to a field there on River Road. Our trucks have very little reason to drive on River Road except when we are combining in the fall.

8. Dust Abatement.

When talking to a local councilor about dust abatement, he said, "Send them to me, that is a municipality responsibility."

9. Solid Waste Management and Ground Runoff.

When applying solid waste to the fields, we follow the Manitoba Conservation setback measurements to avoid the contamination of ground water runoff.

Regarding manure and silage storage on the farm, we have been improving every year. We have built a larger lagoon at this farm which was engineered and approved for use by Manitoba Conservation. The previous lagoon did not have that certificate. This past summer we poured another 700 meters of concrete to do a better job storing our silage and improve our drainage on the yard to further prevent ground runoff.

10. Employment and Economic Impacts on the Community.

As you are already aware, the main economic driver in our community is Agriculture. Currently Rising Hope dairy employs a lot of local staff who purchase houses or pay rent in our area, pay taxes here and their children attend our schools. Since the purchase of this farm, along with the full-time staff, we have had 40 students have their first job here, allowing them to learn work ethic, make money for their schooling, and allowing them to purchase their first car etc. These do not include the many support staff from other local businesses that also spend many hours at our farm and are part of the local community. One of our strengths is giving people a chance to come and prove themselves at our farm, despite a poor resume. Our farm has a significant impact on our local economy.

In conclusion, we hope that by giving you insight into our farm practices, and the regulations and hoops we are required to jump through, you have found some assurance that we are in fact seeking to be conscientious stewards of our land and wanting to live in harmony with the community around us. We have sought to invest in technologies that help us to be more environmentally friendly, reduce traffic on our roads, and also have less impact on the community around us. We are very conscious of the community around us and have made efforts to be more visible by supporting local sport initiatives, sponsoring local hockey players, supporting the building of local daycare, fundraising for our local rec board, sponsoring the STARS fundraiser, supporting the Friendship festival in a variety of ways, and many other local causes. We are passionate about farming, this is not a job, it is a lifestyle, and we believe in what we do.

At least once in your life, you'll need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman and a preacher, but three times a day, everyday you need a farmer.

Thank you,

Paul and Cheryle Warkentine

Kevin and Connie Plett

Alvin and Katherine Plett