

Old MacDonald Had a Cow, Energy-Energy-O!
By: Linda K. Schneider

The first New England settlers didn't ask the government to provide for their energy needs. They knew they had to supply their own. These self-sufficient landowners found property near rivers and streams and operated their grist and other mills with their own waterpower.

Lance Williams, Jr. of Hartland, Vermont says, "You can still see the foundations from the lumber and grist mills on Harlow Brook that my grandfather used to make power more than 100 years ago to supply our family and neighbors with flour and lumber."

Today, we have energy infrastructures that bring us energy from Canada and foreign oil countries. However, nuclear power and oil are not without their problems. There is no process for disposing of nuclear waste products. Expensive foreign oil is ruining our economy—we are at the mercy of the price setters.

Fortunately, our own farms can now supply energy for the state of Vermont. What a grand idea! Central Vermont Public Service Corporation has a new program called CVPS Cow Power™. This program works to help to keep our air and water clean while it also gives customers a renewable energy source.

Manure from cows (a renewable resource!) gets recycled into energy. How does it work? Methane is the gas that escapes from the manure. The farmer purchases a "digester" to capture the methane gas and converts it into usable energy. Then the farmer sells that power to the utility company.

Everybody wins! Farmers get to keep their cows. Vermonters keep the pastures and pastoral views we all love. The farmers finally have a product that will make money as they sell it to the utility company. Homeowners can decide to buy CVPS Cow Power™ instead of foreign oil. That puts us back in control of our energy sources.

This CVPS program is in its early stages. One very large farm in Vermont—Blue Spruce Farm in Bridport—is already producing this type of energy. Four more farms are in various stages of research and development. And the good news is that the technology is progressing toward being suitable for smaller applications.

There is no sign-up fee. However if you choose CVPS Cow Power™ you will pay an extra 4 cents per kilowatt-hour for the electricity. Farmers will benefit and you will support renewable energy markets. Customers can choose their level of Cow Power participation: 25%, 50% or 100% of your total electricity supply. The dollars and cents example is: For 500 kwh per month, choosing 25% CVPS Cow Power™ will cost you an additional \$5 a month; 50% Cow Power will cost an additional \$10; and 100% will be \$20 more a month.

To sign up or learn more about Cow Power and its environmental benefits, go to:
www.cvps.com/cowpower CVPS at: 800-649-2877.

Where we spend our money says something about what's important to us. We can all help choose what kind of world we want to live in. Sign up today to keep Vermont's working landscape viable. Make a real investment in our state's future. This is how Vermont citizens can help farmers and help ourselves to a better, renewable energy source—the cow!

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