

SPRING 2026

DAIRY PROMOTION

Update



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**MAKING
EVERY
DROP
COUNT**



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CEO REMARKS



When I think about what makes dairy strong, I think about people. And when I look across our region, I see women stepping into visible, powerful roles with growing momentum across our farms and our industry.

That's why I'm excited to share that 2026 has been recognized by the United Nations as the *International Year of the Woman Farmer*; and here at Midwest Dairy, we're embracing that recognition in a big way.

Women have always been part of dairy. They've been caring for calves before sunrise, balancing books at the kitchen table, making decisions about genetics, feed, and technology, and raising the next generation of farmers along the way. What's different today is how clearly we see their leadership, as owners, managers, innovators, and advocates for agriculture.

Throughout this year, you'll see Midwest Dairy highlighting women farmers from across our 10-state region, sharing their stories, challenges, and the unique perspectives they bring to dairy. These will be women who are active in our checkoff work and connected to the programs that help build trust and grow dairy demand.

This isn't about putting anyone on a pedestal. It's about recognizing the reality of modern dairy: that women are essential to every part of the value chain, from the farm gate to the consumer's table. And it's about investing in their voices, their ideas, and their leadership, not just for one year, but for the future of our industry.

I hope you'll enjoy getting to know the women we feature this year, and that their stories make you proud of what dairy continues to be: hardworking, innovative, and community-driven.

Respectfully yours,
Coreey Scott

CHAIR REMARKS



I am writing this message in the dead of winter in Minnesota. We have certainly had our share of cold temperatures and winter weather events. As you read this, spring is in the air, and the hope of a new growing season is upon us.

I know each of us goes through difficulties in life, whether related to health, family, or, currently, a downturn in milk prices. At times, it can feel overwhelming. Remember to reach out to fellow farmers and friends. The resilience of the dairy farmer is truly remarkable.

Here at Midwest Dairy, we are applauding the recent updates to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the passage of the *Whole Milk for Healthy Kids* act, which emphasizes whole-fat dairy as part of a healthy diet. This progress reflects more than 80 research studies funded by farmers and a fifteen-year effort by the National Dairy Council to reinforce the role of whole-fat dairy in a healthy diet. The checkoff is developing tools to help schools implement

the new whole milk option in local school districts.

I also want to recognize the outstanding staff at Midwest Dairy. They work hard every day on our behalf to amplify dairy farmer stories, build consumer trust, advance research, work with partners, and grow demand both domestically and abroad. Across our 10-state region, Midwest Dairy has eight divisions, with farmer relations managers and fellow farmer board members in each area who are available to help and answer checkoff questions.

The Midwest Dairy Annual Report was recently published. I strongly encourage you to read it and explore all the work we accomplished over the past year. And if you enjoy podcasts, I encourage you to listen to *Your Dairy Checkoff Podcast*. It originated here at Midwest Dairy and is now led by the national checkoff.

Thank you for your dedication to family, farming, and feeding the world. I wish you a safe and productive planting season.

Respectfully yours,
Charles Krause

The 2025 Annual Report is **Now Available**

The 2025 Annual Report is now available at www.midwestdairy.com/annualreport. Midwest Dairy's fiscal year runs from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, and the report is released every April. It provides an overview of the previous year's programs and activities, remarks from the board chair, financial reports, and other important information.

Midwest Dairy's work extends beyond a single calendar year. Many initiatives span multiple years as we build strong partnerships and long-term campaigns that promote trust and drive dairy sales. While this report does not capture every project Midwest Dairy staff worked on in 2025, it highlights several key achievements. The Annual Report focuses on four core strategies, including

sales, trust, research and developing farmer leaders.

Midwest Dairy invests checkoff funds in local, national, and global initiatives to meet the demands of an evolving marketplace. The approach remains robust, collaborating with industry partners who co-invest in initiatives that enhance checkoff resources, amplify the farmer's voice, and increase the impact of dairy products. The farmer-led board reviews and approves the strategic plan and provides guidance on Midwest Dairy activities. Strategies and outcomes are regularly assessed to ensure alignment with board priorities and relevance to evolving consumer needs and industry changes.

We encourage all dairy farmers to review the Annual Report. Staying informed about Midwest Dairy work is essential to understanding how checkoff dollars are invested to support and promote dairy. The report highlights key initiatives and programs that demonstrate the value of these collective efforts, while reinforcing transparency and accountability across the industry. When farmers stay engaged and informed, they can participate in meaningful conversations, share ideas, and help shape future strategies that benefit both farmers and consumers.

Scan the QR code below to visit the website and access the 2025 Annual Report!



www.midwestdairy.com/annualreport



COLLEGE ATHLETICS *Helps*

College athletics continues to offer Midwest Dairy a powerful platform to reach Gen Z, positioning dairy as a delicious, high-performance fuel for both academics and athletics. Across the region, partnerships with universities and conferences help reinforce trust in dairy, elevate farmer stories, and keep dairy top of mind with young consumers.

University of Nebraska - Lincoln



Midwest Dairy continued its partnership with Husker Athletics throughout 2025, reaching fans through live sporting events, digital platforms, and multiple media channels. This collaboration allowed checkoff to engage athletes and fans in meaningful ways—working directly with

Husker athletes, appearing on the Huskers Football Show, and integrating dairy messaging into radio broadcasts during every Husker volleyball match.

New this year, Trivia Tuesday and the Flex Cam Powered by Dairy brought dairy to life in fun, high-visibility moments at volleyball and men’s and women’s basketball games. These activations helped reinforce positive perceptions of dairy among one of the most engaged fan bases in the country.



Iowa State University



At Iowa State University (ISU), Midwest Dairy connected with Gen Z students through a partnership with Cyclone Sports Properties, LLC, focused on authentic storytelling and athlete involvement. The centerpiece was a farm-to-fan video featuring ISU

volleyball student-athlete Morgan Brandt and dairy student Haley Ronnebaum, a former Iowa Dairy Princess.



Together, they toured the ISU Dairy Farm, highlighting sustainability practices and showcasing the care and innovation behind dairy production—including the journey of the iconic Clone Cone served at Hilton Coliseum. This content helped deepen students’ understanding of where dairy comes from and how farmers prioritize sustainability.



Dairy Score Big with Gen Z

Kansas State University



Partnering with college athlete influencers continues to help dairy remain relevant to Gen Z, while reinforcing its connection to wellness and nutrition. At Kansas State University, Midwest Dairy partnered with volleyball athletes Tatum Tindall and Makinsey Jones, who shared how chocolate milk authentically fits into their daily routines.

Their two Instagram posts reached more than 8,800 unique people, generating 34,603 impressions and 1,121 engagements—clear indicators that their audiences were receptive to dairy content and that college-athlete influencer partnerships can effectively amplify dairy’s message.



Big 12 Conference

Dairy made a strong impact across the Big 12 Conference in 2025. At the Big 12 Wrestling Championship in Tulsa, fans visited the Cozy Cow Lounge to enjoy milk and cereal and participate in dairy trivia for prizes. At the Phillips 66 Big 12 Women’s and Men’s Basketball Championships in Kansas City, dairy was featured prominently through the Big 12 Eats menu—where 80% of items included dairy—along with a “Moo-ve and Groove” silent disco and opportunities for fans to meet dairy farm families.

In December, Midwest Dairy partnered with Dairy MAX to expand dairy’s presence at women’s soccer and football championship events in Texas. Fans engaged with Dairy MAX’s Better with Dairy brand through a 360° video booth, giveaways, and samples of the official Dallas Cowboys’ macaroni and cheese, further reinforcing dairy’s role in fueling athletes and fans alike.

These activations—and similar efforts across Midwest Dairy’s 10-state region—continue to strengthen Gen Z’s connection to dairy. Checkoff looks forward to building on these partnerships with college athletics, including the Big 12 Conference, throughout 2026.



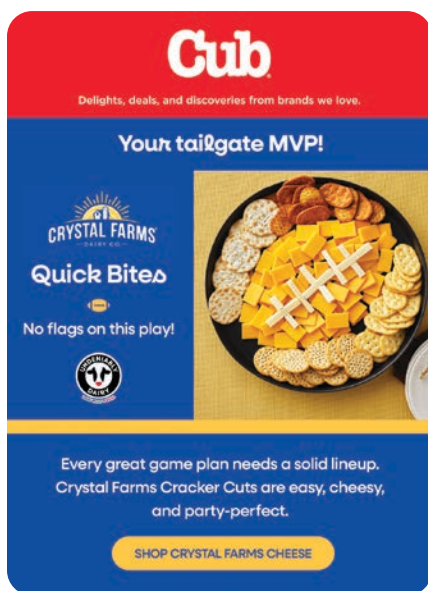


FROM LUNCHBOXES TO KICKOFF: *Dairy Wins Back-to-School*

During the fall back-to-school and tailgating season, Midwest Dairy teamed up with several retail partners to drive demand for dairy products across the 10-state region. As part of Midwest Dairy's strategy to leverage key moments throughout the year, the back-to-school season provides an ideal opportunity to remind families that dairy offers both nutrition and convenience, making it a natural fit for lunchboxes, snacks, and quick breakfasts. Midwest Dairy leveraged a second key moment, tailgating, to remind shoppers that dairy belongs at every celebration.

■ Cub Foods

Last fall, Midwest Dairy partnered with Cub Foods to spotlight two flavorful campaigns that put dairy at the heart of family meals, game-day celebrations, and seasonal traditions. The *Fall Cub Magazine* featured dairy-filled recipes, including a "Cheesy Fun Time" tailgating spread, showcasing real cheese favorites. Cub Foods continued the theme with "Say Cheese" shoppable banner ads and social content encouraging shoppers to dive into the cheese aisle and rediscover the joy of Real Cheese = Real Delicious. Together, these campaigns tapped into the top five drivers of consumer food and



beverage choices today - taste, price, freshness, healthfulness, and convenience - delivering half a million impressions and strong visibility for dairy during a key moment.

■ Hy-Vee



Midwest Dairy partnered with Hy-Vee to put cheese front and center during tailgating season, connecting dairy to game-day favorites and driving strong results for Midwest dairy farmers.

The campaign brought together leading cheese brands alongside complementary items like buns and meats, creating a full-store experience that made it easy for shoppers to build the perfect tailgate spread. The campaign used a strong mix of digital and in-store tactics to meet shoppers wherever they planned to shop. These efforts included off-site and on-site digital ads, weekly email banners, shoppable recipes, and in-store signage, ensuring dairy stayed visible from online browsing to checkout. Together, these tactics generated more than three million impressions and drove over \$195,000 in

incremental dairy sales. The campaign delivered more than 551,000 incremental pounds of milk sold, turning digital engagement into real value for dairy farm families. Notably, 89% of conversions happened in-store, where dairy performs strongest, showing the power of pairing digital inspiration with physical retail presence. From trusted brands to crowd-pleasing recipes, this tailgating campaign showed how strategic partnerships and seasonal moments can drive demand, celebrate dairy, and deliver measurable returns for farmers across the Midwest.

■ Schnucks

Midwest Dairy once again partnered with Schnucks Markets to support its annual back-to-

school marketing campaign, helping families discover easy, nutritious meal ideas during one of the busiest times of the year. This collaboration positioned Schnucks as a trusted destination for simple school-day solutions and highlighted how dairy foods can help fuel students from morning to night. The campaign reached shoppers across multiple touchpoints, ensuring they saw dairy



and Tailgating Season

messaging no matter how they planned their meals. This omnichannel approach made it easy for busy parents to find new ideas and see how cottage cheese, yogurt, and other dairy staples can elevate school lunches and after-school snacks. The creative messaging centered on a 2x points offer, which resonated strongly with Schnucks' active rewards members. One retail media network activation alone generated 1,978,539 impressions and delivered a \$24.65 return on ad spend, a strong performance for back-to-school



2X
POINTS ON
SCHNUCKS
COTTAGE
CHEESE
(24 OZ)

OFFER VALID
7/30 - 8/26



SHOP NOW



content. Shoppers didn't just engage, they purchased. The campaign drove 239,000 incremental pounds of milk in the cottage cheese and yogurt category, showing that families were inspired to try new dairy recipes and stock up on nutritious staples for the school year.

Neptune Retail Solutions + Chicory + Instacart

Chicory, a third-party vendor, drives sales growth through recipe inspiration. It turns online recipes into interactive experiences by allowing shoppers to add ingredients directly to their online grocery carts. Online recipe use has surged, with 91% of shoppers using recipes regularly.



Midwest Dairy partnered with Chicory to bring dairy front and center through *Back to Sports* messaging. Results from the Chicory campaign included 4.6 million impressions with over 57,000 clicks on the ad for a clickthrough rate of 0.12%, driving over 5 million incremental pounds of milk sold.

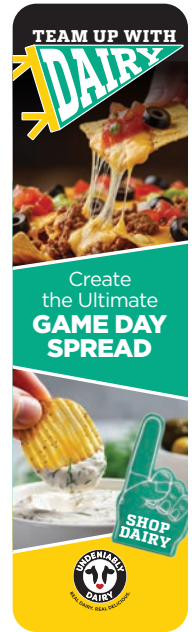
Neptune Retail Solutions is a third-party vendor that supports in-store signage across retailers in the 10-state region. Data shows that 86% of grocery trips take place in physical stores, and 46% of in-store shoppers are inspired by displays and signage. Midwest Dairy teamed up with Neptune to "Create the Ultimate Game Day Spread" through aisle blades. In total, 896 stores featured signage in the cheese aisle, including Kroger, Hy-Vee, Jewel, Schnucks, Fareway, and Price Chopper, resulting in over 1.5 million incremental pounds of milk sold.

Midwest Dairy partnered with Instacart - the largest online grocery

marketplace in North America - to connect consumers with personal shoppers who deliver groceries from local retailers straight to their doors. Through search and shoppable e-commerce display ads, the campaign drove 3.3 million impressions, with 94,000 clicks and an \$18.30 return on ad spend.

By leveraging key moments, such as back-to-school and tailgating, Midwest Dairy partners with retailers to develop strong campaigns with dairy-focused messaging that drive millions of incremental pounds of milk sold for farmers while reinforcing dairy as a go-to solution for consumers.

Watch Your Checkoff at Work
<https://mwdairy.co/KeyMomentsYT>





LASSO GRANTS

Fuel On-Farm Innovation



In 2024, Midwest Dairy launched a free grant-writing support program for on-farm projects in partnership with Lasso. Often described as a “grant writer in a box,” Lasso helps farmers identify, apply for, and manage grant opportunities that support their operations. Acting as a grant-writing handyman, the Lasso team provides hands-on support at every step of the process.

To participate, farmers must be open to pursuing grants, have a defined project in mind with potential installers, vendors, or service providers identified, and be willing to serve as a case study for Midwest Dairy. With more funding available than ever to support sustainable businesses—and many dairy farmers eligible—this program is opening new doors across the 10-state region. Keep reading to learn about Midwest Dairy farmers who saw success through the program in 2025.

Kevin Knapp (IA)

Knapp Time Dairy, owned by Kevin and Cari Knapp, is located in northwest Iowa. The dairy is planning a major expansion to improve efficiency and transition its farm to the next generation.

The Knapps aim to expand and modernize their dairy by transitioning from a tie-stall barn and installing five Lely A5 Robots in a free-stall barn. The robots will milk 320 cows, with the remainder of the herd milked in the tie-stall barn, for a total of 450 cows. Their current milking routine is

labor-intensive, and the new system will significantly reduce labor demands, enhance cow comfort, increase milk production, and lower physical strain on workers.

The size and scope of this project were overwhelming, but when Kevin read about available grants through the Iowa State Dairy Association and Midwest Dairy, the opportunity caught his attention.

In 2025, they seized the opportunity to collaborate with Midwest Dairy partner

Lasso, which made a significant difference. Lasso’s clear structure, professional guidance, and reassurance helped them move forward with confidence.

In the end, the Knapps worked with Lasso to prepare a grant application for the Choose Iowa Dairy Grant. Grant funding allowed Knapp Time Dairy to complete a transformative expansion that reduces labor, improves cow comfort, and positions their family farm for the next generation.



Piet van Bedaf (ND)

VanBedaf's Dairy, a North Dakota-based family dairy, produces high-quality A2A2 milk. With growing demand for A2A2 dairy products and increased milk throughput needs, the farm sought to upgrade its milk storage and cooling infrastructure. Their goal was to support market expansion, improve sustainability, and future-proof operations by capturing energy efficiencies. By securing grant funding, the dairy could invest in infrastructure improvements necessary for production growth and sustainability.

Piet van Bedaf initially learned about value-added agricultural grants, including the North Dakota Agriculture Diversification and Development Grant, through personal connections and state agencies. At the beginning of the grant process, van Bedaf was unaware of the support available through Midwest Dairy and its partnership with Lasso. Once he began working with Lasso, the grant application process became far more manageable. The Lasso team brought clarity and structure, particularly in developing a business plan that resonated with the grant reviewers.

The awarded grant funds were used to install a heat recovery system to capture waste heat from refrigeration compressors, improving compressor efficiency and preheating water, increasing milk production capacity, expanding on-farm storage to meet growing milk demands, and supporting the scaling up of A2A2 milk bottling operations.

Securing grant funding allowed VanBedaf Dairy to modernize its cooling and storage systems, laying the foundation for sustainable expansion and increased production. Through improved energy efficiency and enhanced capacity, the farm is now better positioned to meet market demand and contribute to the regional agricultural economy. The project also reinforced the value of expert support in navigating grant applications, turning a complex process into a streamlined success.

Stacey Demmer (IA)

Demmer Family Farms is a second-generation dairy and crop operation in rural Iowa. The Demmer family milks



180 cows using three VMS robotic milking systems. Every other day, 30,000 pounds of milk are delivered to Wapsie Valley, a local, family-owned cheese producer known for its preference for high-butterfat milk.

The farm has adopted modern technology in some areas, but other daily tasks remain time-consuming and physically demanding. Like many farms, Demmer Family Farms face the challenges of an ongoing labor shortage, especially with essential but repetitive tasks each day, like pushing feed or monitoring herd health. To address this, the family planned to invest in two pieces of equipment: an OptiDuo Feed

Pusher and a BA200 Ear Tag Monitoring System. The combined impact of these tools would be significant—saving about \$12,000 in labor costs annually and increasing milk output by approximately 6%, translating to an estimated \$60,000 in added revenue. The tools would also prepare the farm for the future.

Stacey Demmer first learned about the Choose Iowa Grant opportunity through an industry publication, and the grant supported labor-reducing technology, like the feed pusher. She had applied for the Choose Iowa Grant in the previous year, but without success. For the second attempt, Midwest Dairy's partnership with Lasso came into play. Lasso helped her significantly improve and expand the content, making the application stronger. By partnering with Lasso, Stacey submitted a complete and competitive application, backed by project quotes, a timeline, and proof of financial match.

For Demmer Family Farms, the investment in labor-saving technology was a practical decision rooted in long-term planning. It offered a way to increase productivity, reduce repetitive tasks, and create a more sustainable balance for the family.

Midwest Dairy is excited to share more success stories as additional farms have achieved positive results through Lasso's grant process.

For more information on our grant writing successes or to learn more about Lasso's Grant Writing Support, please visit midwestdairy.com/lasso.

Learn About Midwest Dairy's Strategic

Midwest Dairy proudly represents more than 3,600 dairy farms serving 41.8 million consumers across a 10-state region. Checkoff works on behalf of dairy farmers to build dairy demand by strengthening consumer confidence in dairy products and production practices. These goals are achieved through the strategic objectives below by working with and through partners.



INCREASE DAIRY SALES

Midwest Dairy's goal is to increase dairy sales by 24 million pounds of milk each year through partnerships with the retail and foodservice sectors, focusing on incremental pounds of milk sold and sales opportunities. Midwest Dairy provides value for our partners through dairy expertise and insights, helping them make informed decisions and drive sales growth.



Scott Gilray
VP, Business Development



TRUST

Midwest Dairy focuses on building consumer trust, as research shows that higher trust in dairy is linked to increased dairy purchases. A key driver of trust is confidence that dairy is produced responsibly, with strong commitments to environmental stewardship, animal care, and sustainable nutrition. To strengthen trust at scale, Midwest Dairy engages multiple priority audiences, including parents with children at home, Gen Z consumers, and influential thought leaders. Parents play a critical role in household food decisions, while Gen Z shapes long-term attitudes about food, sustainability, and values. Through influencer partnerships, experiential activations, and digital storytelling, Midwest Dairy brings dairy's sustainability story to life in credible, relatable ways that reach consumers where they seek food and health information.

In parallel, Midwest Dairy works with sustainability, nutrition, and education thought leaders who influence public opinion and key decision-making forums, including dietary guidance. Because Gen Z and modern families place high value on science-based information, Midwest Dairy connects academic research with real-world farming practices through campus engagement, classroom resources, and professional development. By building long-term relationships with trusted experts and educators, Midwest Dairy strengthens understanding of dairy's nutritional value and farmers' commitment to environmental and animal care—inspiring informed confidence, voluntary advocacy, and continued trust in dairy among today's families and future generations.



Lela Fausze
VP, Trust Partnerships

Objectives for 2026



DEVELOPING LEADERS

Midwest Dairy works with dairy farmers across its 10-state region to help them share their stories in their communities. Midwest Dairy provides resources for consumer engagement, crisis preparedness, media training, and more. The goal is to empower farmers to showcase their farms and advocate for the dairy industry through grants, training programs, and marketing materials. This strategy includes an online promotional center filled with engaging conversation starters about dairy designed to attract a crowd. Additionally, Midwest Dairy invests in the next generation of dairy leaders through programs, scholarships, and internships, paving the way for continued success in the dairy industry.



Mitch Schulte
VP, Ag Affairs



RESEARCH

Midwest Dairy is committed to advancing dairy research and innovation to fuel a strong industry into the future. To achieve this work, Midwest Dairy focuses on three core strategies. The first strategy equips partners with consumer and market insights to inform their business decisions. This work is accomplished through meetings with processors, foodservice, and retail partners, as well as through strategic insights shared through webinars, newsletters, and events. The second strategy focuses on investing in research through the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center and its six collaborating universities. The research-center funded project results are shared with the industry to inform operational processes, improve food safety, and provide hands-on solutions support provided by faculty experts. The third strategy identifies innovative dairy-focused start-ups and provides them with tools, expertise, and support through the Accelerator program to boost their business in the marketplace, impacting dairy sales.



Michelle Watson
VP, Research & Innovation



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Dairy is Meeting the Moment with Today's Consumers



Dairy is in a strong position with today's consumers, and the momentum is real. At a time when shoppers are watching their budgets more closely and paying closer attention to what they eat, dairy continues to deliver on what matters most: taste, nutrition, and everyday practicality.

Consumer research shows that people want foods that are affordable, enjoyable, and easy to use, while still supporting their health goals. Midwest Dairy works with Mintel and Circana, both premier market research firms that track consumer behavior.

According to Mintel, these priorities are shaping how shoppers think about sustainability and value. Dairy checks all three boxes, and consumers recognize it.

In fact, Midwest Dairy's own research shows strong agreement among consumers across our 10-state region. Nearly nine in 10 say they love dairy, and more than 70% view dairy as an affordable option for their families. Even more important, consumers associate dairy with health and nutrition: 84% say dairy is nutritious, 82% recognize it as a good source of protein, and 88% say they regularly cook and bake with dairy at home.

That confidence is showing up at the store. According to Circana, dairy volume growth in 2025 was driven by value-added products that align with evolving needs, particularly high-protein and lactose-free options. Lactose-free milk grew more than 7%, yogurt nearly 9%, and cottage cheese posted standout growth of almost 15%. Even familiar staples like butter, natural cheese, and cream continue to grow, reinforcing dairy's relevance across meals and occasions.

That said, the picture isn't without challenges. Midwest Dairy research shows that some consumers remain uncertain about dairy's sustainability practices. Just over half agree that dairy products are environmentally friendly or come from

cows that are treated humanely. Perceived sensitivities, especially among younger consumers like Gen Z, also continue to influence purchasing decisions. While dairy sales still far outpace alternatives, some shoppers turn to substitutes due to perceived digestibility or environmental concerns.

Milk consumption remains a pressure point, down slightly in 2025, and broader headwinds such as potential changes to dietary guidelines, inflation, tariffs, and job market uncertainty could affect future demand.

Despite the potential challenges, the opportunity ahead is clear: consumers already value dairy for what it delivers. By continuing to share how dairy is produced, how farmers care for their animals and land, and how dairy fits into modern lifestyles, we can build trust, address misconceptions, and keep dairy growing with the next generation and beyond.

