



Maine Farm Bureau Association

“The Voice of Organized Agriculture”

November 14, 2009

**Maine Farm Bureau
Statement on the Air National Guard
Proposed Low-Altitude Flight Training**

My name is Jon Olson. I am the Executive Secretary of the Maine Farm Bureau, the state’s largest general farm organization. Maine Farm Bureau is a voluntary, nonprofit organization formed in 1951 for the purpose of analyzing economic and public problems of agriculture and formulating action to achieve agricultural viability. Our policy is determined by a grass-roots process starting with individual farmers meeting together throughout the state.

Maine Farm Bureau is opposed to the proposed change to the Condor flight space that would drop flight space levels from 7,000 to 500 feet in military operation areas used by training by the 104th Fighter Wing of the Massachusetts Air National Guard in Westfield, Massachusetts. The proposed Condor space covers portions of Franklin, Oxford, Piscataquis and Somerset counties.

Our strong objection is the effect that these flights will have on the livestock industry in the proposed Condor space. According to the latest New England Agricultural Statistics Service, these four Maine counties have a total of 1,062 livestock farms that include dairy, beef and horse operations, contributing over \$26 million in sales each year. These farms collectively own 17,178 beef, 7,393 dairy cows and 2,467 horses. This data does not include sheep, llama or alpaca farms and animal numbers which are growing in the affected Condor space.

These animals are mostly pastured. We are extremely concerned what the loud sonic boom and visual approaches of the low flights of these jets will do to the livestock industry. These animals will be stressed and possibly terrified. Farmers are worried that these panic animals will run through fences not only injuring themselves, but also becoming lost. There is some concern by dairy farmers of loss of milk production. It is our understanding that this has occurred from low level training flights in western United States.

Several years ago, a dairy farmer told me about an incident on his farm when a silent hot air balloon passed over his pasture. It so panicked his cows, they ran and broke through the fence. Though the farmer with the help of his neighbor was able to capture them, he still had the repercussions from this flight over his pasture. Some of his cows had torn their udders running through the fence causing not only loss of milk production, but also an unexpected veterinarian expense. I can only image what a low level training flight with its sonic bloom will do to his or other livestock.

Thank you for your attention. I’ll be happy to answer any questions you may have.