



The Center Spotlight

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Tioga Dairyman: “New Assignment a Privilege, a Responsibility”

Editor’s Note: This is part of a monthly series of timely articles and information from the Center for Dairy Excellence, a non-profit organization focused on strengthening Pennsylvania’s dairy industry.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Erick Coolidge, Wellsboro, is no stranger to advocating for better public policy on behalf of dairy farmers.

For the past 15 years, he served as a Tioga County Commissioner and several years as president of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. For the past five years, he has been a member of the Pennsylvania Dairy Task Force, and since 2008, has served on the Center for Dairy Excellence board of directors.

Erick did not hesitate when his U.S. Representative, Glenn “GT” Thompson, asked if he would be willing to serve on the USDA Dairy Advisory Committee. Rep. Thompson joined five other Pennsylvania Congressmen in nominating Erick, who was appointed to the 17-member committee in January.

“It is a privilege for me to serve on this committee, and I recognize that very clearly, and I am very conscious of the magnitude of this role,” Erick says. “I am seeking input from as many organizations as I can. No one individual can grasp all the aspects of the issues out there, so it takes the input of many.”

Roots deep in Pennsylvania agriculture

Erick is the fourth generation to farm in a little settlement outside of Wellsboro called Coolidge Hollow. Named after his ancestors, the hollow was home to several Coolidge family farms in the mid-1800s.

Today, Erick, his wife Dixie, son Derick, and daughter-in-law Brienne operate Le-Ma-Re Farms LLC, a 120-cow dairy with 110 heifer replacements. In January, the Coolidges formed a limited liability corporation to incorporate Derick into the business.

Each morning before he goes to the courthouse to serve as commissioner, Erick helps with the morning milking. However, he relies on Dixie to manage the dairy herd and on Derick to manage the crops,

with 450 acres of tillable ground and 300 acres of pasture and woodland.

About a year and a half ago, with the encouragement of the Center for Dairy Excellence, Le-Ma-Re Farms established a Dairy Profit Team. “That profit team has had a big impact on our bottom line,” Erick says.

“Our veterinarian now formulates our feed program, and our feed company works closely with him. Our accountant provided advice on forming the LLC, and Farm Credit understands more how the investments we are making play into our goals.”

The Coolidges were also prompted by their profit team to move from two to three milkings a day in 2009. “That helped us move from the mid-70s to mid-80s in daily milk production.”

Nearly two decades of Public Service

For the past 15 years, Erick has been balancing his role as a dairy farmer with his role as the Tioga County Commissioner. In that role, he has represented Pennsylvania on the National Board of County Commissioners and as a member of the Rural Action Caucus and Agriculture Committee.

Erick has also been a tireless advocate for agriculture through his involvement in zoning and land use issues. He hosted bill authors to take a pro-active role in legislation pertaining to zoning and land use. He is also currently the chair of the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission and a member of the Solid Waste Advisory Board to the Pennsylvania Department of Environment Resources.

Erick served in leadership roles with his cooperative, Dairylea, and is a board member of the Pennsylvanian Judicial Commission, Area Agency on Aging and the Wellsboro Electric Company.

He is a member of the Coolidge Hollow United Methodist Church and the Wellsboro Men’s Chorus.



Erick Coolidge, Wellsboro, is one of 17 individuals selected to serve on the USDA’s new Dairy Industry Advisory Committee. Coolidge is a fourth-generation dairy farmer and has served as Tioga County Commissioner for the past 15 years.

The Role of the Dairy Advisory Committee

Still in its infancy, Erick says the USDA Dairy Advisory Committee plans to meet initially in Washington, D.C., for one week later this spring. “We will meet and begin to deliberate on the issues.”

Then, much of the communication over the summer will happen electronically and through conference calls. “We meet for a second week in the fall to continue our deliberation.”

Coolidge calls the advisory committee a “wonderful opportunity for all of us in the dairy industry to come together and settle on a unified, consistent message” to take to policy leaders.

“We all run our operations differently, and we have diverse ideas on what should happen, but the only way this will have a positive outcome is if we all recognize that we need to be saying our message the same way across the country.”

Milk Prices Rebound in December, State Production Grows

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Wholesale milk prices reached above a year-earlier levels in December, up 80 cents to \$17.90 per hundredweight, according to the latest *Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance*

Scorecard. December’s price is \$3.45 higher than the average wholesale milk price in 2009. Feed prices fell 13.6 percent from a year ago, down 0.9 percent from November, which strengthened milk margins

by 16.6 percent from a year ago.

Milk production in the state was up 0.7 percent in December, despite a 10,000 head loss in cow numbers. Much of the increase is attributed to an increase in daily production per cow.

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	December 2008 Report	December 2009 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	548,000 cows	538,000 cows	- 1.8%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.575 bill. lbs.	10.549 bill. lbs.	- 0.2%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$17.10/cwt.	\$17.90/cwt.	+4.7%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 65 lbs. milk)	\$6.83/cwt.	\$5.83/cwt.	- 13.6%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	59 lbs.	60 lbs.	+2.6%	80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	9%	10%	+7.7%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	21,124 lbs.	20,892 lbs.	- 1.1%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	293,000	264,660	- 9.7%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	32%	40%	+26.2%	
Average Days In Milk	187 Days	184 Days	- 1.4%	185 Days
Average Age to First Calving	25.5 months	25.4 months	- 0.6%	21—24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	89 Days	89 Days	- 0.5%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	33.2%	33.9%		20—35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	17.88%	17.69%	- 1.1%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	www.centerfordairyexcellence.org			

Milk Quality Improves

Pennsylvania’s dairy farm families continue to improve in the area of milk quality. Somatic cell count levels fell 9.7 percent from a year ago in December, down to 264,660. The November and December 2009 time period marks the lowest two-month period for SCC in the past two years.

Improving milk quality is one way to add dollars to your bottom line. Studies show farmers can increase their profitability per cow per lactation by \$83 just by decreasing the cow’s linear SCC score by 1 point.

Farms with somatic cell counts at 300,000 or below often qualify for added premiums from their processor. These premiums can be as high as 80 cents per hundredweight.

Cows with lower somatic cell counts also produce more milk. The difference between 60 and 80 pounds of milk per cow per day could add up to \$40,000 in additional income annually on an average-sized dairy farm.

To view the complete scorecard and find resources for your dairy, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 717-346-0849.