



The Center Spotlight

www.centerfordairyexcellence.org ♦ Phone: 717-346-0849

Potter Co. Producer Finds Strength in Common Ground

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. — When Candy Cooney, Ulysess, Pa., was first asked to coordinate the Young Producers Learning Group in her area, she hesitated just for a moment. “The farms around here are few and far between, and I thought it would be hard to find participants,” she says.

Still, Cooney was never one to shy away from a new experience, so she took the challenge and ran with it. “Four young couples, ages 24—30, are now a part of the group, and they are really excited about what they are doing,” Cooney says. “It just inspires me to see them working together and sharing ideas.”

Cooney says the learning group builds on the concept of strength in numbers. “When you talk with other producers, you realize you are not the only one in the boat and remember that you are not alone,” she says. “You get to hear what they are doing, and it can give you ideas that may work on your own farm. You find out what works and what doesn't.”

Another benefit Cooney, who with her husband owns Rolandice Registered Holsteins in Potter County, finds in talking with other producers is the opportunity to see things from another perspective. “When you get someone else to look at your particular situation, you can get an objective point of view. When you bounce ideas off of them, you realize they see it from a different perspective than someone who is in the middle of it all of the time.”

Standing on Each Other's Shoulders

Cooney believes the young producers involved in the learning group are building lifelong friendships. “They found common ground with one another, and I can see they are going to help one another.

“They are working together on financial strategies, looking at cash flow projections and even

talking about forming a co-op buying group,” she says. “Mostly I just sit back and watch them interact. The discussion just goes right around the room, with the ideas about what might work and what might not flying all over the place.”

Cooney's group is one of several Young Producer Learning Groups the Center for Dairy Excellence is helping to coordinate around the state. Penn State Dairy Alliance is also working to coordinate more general Dairy Producer Discussion Groups in different regions of the state.

To take this concept one step farther, the center has organized “Dairy Roundtable Discussion” meetings in March. With the dairy economic situation putting many Pennsylvania dairy farms in peril, the roundtable discussion meetings are designed to help producers share ideas and find solutions for managing cash flow.

An Open Venue to Share Ideas

Any dairy producer or manager can attend the dairy roundtable discussions, which will be held in Lancaster, Martinsburg and State College later this month. The meetings will focus on bringing producers together to hear solutions for managing through the economic downturn while sharing ideas on improving short-term and long-term cash flow.

Dairy Discussion Roundtable Meeting Details:

- **Tuesday, March 17**, from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Celebration Hall, 2280 Commercial Boulevard, State College, Pa.
- **Thursday, March 26**, from 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Martinsburg Airport, 2 Airport Drive, Martinsburg, Pa.
- **Monday, March 30**, from 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster, Pa.



Guest speakers at the meetings include Gary Snider, Farm Business Consultant from Western New York Farm Credit, and Mike Hosterman, Agricultural Business Consultant with AgChoice Farm Credit.

Those interested in attending are welcome to bring their ideas to share for managing margins during the milk price depression. There is no cost to participate in the roundtable meetings, but pre-registration is required.

The “Dairy Roundtable Discussion” meetings are just one of many opportunities producers have to learn from others in the state. Cooney says these type of events can offer tremendous benefits.

“As producers, we have to stay upbeat,” she says. “When you visit with other producers, you realize it is not as bad as it could be and that it will get better. We need to be encouraging and supportive of each other.”

To register for the meetings, call 717-346-0849 or log onto www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.

Expanded Scorecard Shows Trends in Key Performance Indicators

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Earlier this month the Center for Dairy Excellence released an expanded Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard, which gathers data from DHI, Penn State and the National Ag Statistics Services to show trends in Pennsylvania's dairy herds.

Along with data on milk production and cow

numbers, the scorecard now references state averages in herd performance areas, including rolling somatic cell count, days in milk, age to first calving and to first service, cull rate and pregnancy rates.

The summary below shows a comparison of January's levels against those from a year ago and what the targeted range is for that performance area.

As margins tighten, producers' best recourse is to control the controllable. The target ranges are intended to help producers critically evaluate herd performance in multiple areas.

Dairy producers are encouraged to use this scorecard to compare their own herd's performance against the state averages and target levels identified in the scorecard. Your herd's data can be found on your DHI 202 Herd Report that accompanies your monthly test reports.

Increasing daily milk output per cow is one way to strengthen a farm's bottom line. In fact, the difference between 60 and 80 pounds per cow per day could result in \$40,000 additional income per year. Each factor listed on this scorecard affects a herd's ability to maximize milk production.

VIEW SCORECARD ONLINE:

You can learn more about trends in Pennsylvania's dairy industry by viewing the complete Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard online. The scorecard shows how the trends have changed over the past 25 months.

Visit the center's Web site at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org and click on the “Scorecard” icon on the bottom right.

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	January 2008 Report	January 2009 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	552,000 cows	550,000 cows	-0.40%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.682 bill. lbs.	10.572 bill. lbs.	-1.0%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$22.60/cwt.	\$15.70/cwt.	-30.5%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 65 lbs. milk)	\$4.80/cwt.	\$4.38/cwt.	-8.8%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	60 lbs.	60 lbs.	No Chge.	80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	15%	12%	-18.7%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	20,854 lbs.	21,097 lbs.	+1.7%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	293,200	290,200	+1.0%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	33 %	34 %	+4.4%	
Average Days In Milk	188 Days	185 Days	+1.6%	185 Days
Average Age to First Calving	25.6 months	25.5 months	+0.4%	21—24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	91 Days	90 Days	+1.1%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	32%	33%	-3.1%	20—35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	17.7%	18.4%	+4.0%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	www.centerfordairyexcellence.org			



CENTER FOR Dairy EXCELLENCE