



# The Center Spotlight

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

## Berks Co. Dairy Farmer Says Farmers Can Find Help At The Center

**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. — Lolly Leshar and her husband William are deeply committed to the dairy industry. As dairy farmers and owners of Way-Har Farm Market in Bernville, Berks Co., they believe dairy has a long and brilliant future in Pennsylvania, and they want to see their children someday be able to dairy farm.

There is no question, though, that the past 18 months have shaken that future. "It's been a challenge staying on top of everything as the markets started to crumble and milk prices declined," Leshar says. "I am the pencil pusher, and it takes a lot of time and information management to really know what our current status is and how we can make decisions to move forward."

That is why Leshar sees tremendous value in the Center for Dairy Excellence and the programs it offers for producers. "Every day the center staff rolls out of bed and asks themselves, 'What can we do to help dairy farmers today?'," she says. "No other organization in Pennsylvania has that devoted team fully engaged in helping dairy farms succeed."

### A Resource for Farmers

For the past two years, Leshar has served as the president of the Center for Dairy Excellence's board of directors. "I believe that the center can be a leader in helping grow my family's business and other dairy farm businesses across the state.

"If I can play a role in directing the center's programs and streamlining its activities to offer meaningful resources for farms, I think it is important for the future of dairy in PA," she says.

An example of those resources is the center's on-farm dairy resource team program, which provides funding and resources for individual farms to establish dairy profit, target profit or succession planning teams. "Profit teams have had a huge benefit for the farmers who gave them a try," she says.

Another program Leshar believes is valuable is the "Mastering the Dairy Business" conference call series offered by the center.

"Farmers should be calling into the MDB calls to participate," she says. "You don't have to leave your house, it doesn't cost anything, and it is a timely, convenient way to gather valuable information to use in decision making."

Other programs Leshar lists as offering value include the center's profit forum held each fall, the farm tours in the summer, and the Dairy Summit, which the center helps to plan for the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders every February. The center also offers risk management and business planning resources for farms.

"I talked to farmers who attended the profit forum last fall, and they told me they took home ideas from that forum that they could apply on their dairy farms immediately to help strengthen their bottom lines," Leshar says. "That is invaluable."

### Just a phone call or e-mail away

"There are continuous educational opportunities and other resources coming out of the center," she says. "You just have to engage yourself enough to check the Web site or read the paper to find out about those resources. If nothing else, you can just call the center office, and someone will be happy to help you.

"The center's biggest goal is to help dairy farmers connect with the right resources — whether it's opportunities through the farmer's sales and service representatives, the profit team program, or other programs available in the industry," Leshar says. "If you come to the center with your questions, the center will work to help you find the right resources to get the answers you need to help your dairy."

One way dairy farmers can stay informed about the resources and opportunities available through the Center for Dairy Excellence is to sign up to receive the center's bi-weekly newsletter. "It is an excellent resource, and it has a wealth of information not only



Lolly Leshar, a dairy farmer from Wayhar Farms in Bernville, Berks County, has served as the president of the Center for Dairy Excellence's board for two years.

about the center's programs, but also about other resources available to dairy farms."

The next educational event for dairy farmers will be the center's "Mastering the Dairy Business" conference call with Joanna Samuelson, Farm Credit East, where she authors the *Northeast Dairy Farm Summary* (also called the "Blue Book"), a study of the financial health and progress of Northeast dairy farms.

During the conference call, Samuelson will walk through the data in the "Blue Book" and show key 2009 trends, both on the financial and production side of the dairy business. Call participants can use the data to compare their own dairy to these trends and gather ideas for strengthening their own businesses for the coming year.

For more information about this upcoming conference call or other center resources, call the Center for Dairy Excellence at 717-346-0849 or e-mail [info@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:info@centerfordairyexcellence.org).

## PA Dairy Herds Show Strength in Management Numbers

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The latest Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard shows that cow numbers have fallen 10,000 head from a year

ago, while milk production per cow is up two percent. Milk margins have improved from a year ago, with higher milk prices and lower feed costs.

The real story, though, is in the strong improvements Pennsylvania's dairy farms have made in several key management areas that lead to greater profitability on the farm.

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	February 2009 Report	February 2010 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	551,000 cows	541,000 cows	- 1.8%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.544 bill. lbs.	10.536 bill. lbs.	- 0.1%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$13.50/cwt.	\$16.20/cwt.	+31.0%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 65 lbs. milk)	\$6.69/cwt.	\$5.82/cwt.	- 13.0%	
Milk Margin (IOFC @ 100# of Milk)	\$6.81/cwt.	\$11.88/cwt.	+74.4%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	61 lbs.	62 lbs.	+2.0%	80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	13%	14%	+7.2%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	21,005 lbs.	20,894 lbs.	- 0.5%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	279,200	255,600	- 8.5%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	37%	42%	+14.1%	
Average Days In Milk	185 Days	181 Days	- 2.2%	185 Days
Average Age to First Calving	25 .5 months	25.5 months	—	21—24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	90 Days	89 Days	- 1.1%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	33.2%	33.7%	1.5%	20—35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	18.81%	19.30%	2.6%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	<a href="http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org">www.centerfordairyexcellence.org</a>			

Somatic cell counts continue to fall across the state, down 8.5 percent from a year ago and closing in on 250,000. Lower somatic cell counts are an indication of improved milk quality, which leads to greater premiums and returns for the farm.

Both the average days in milk and average pregnancy rate for farms have improved as well. Pregnancy rates are now 19.3 percent, very close to the goal of having pregnancy rates of 20 percent or higher. Days in Milk is down 2.2 percent. Both are an indication of improved reproduction protocols on the farm.

Making improvements in herd management protocols can help farms improve production and strengthen their bottom line. In periods of low milk prices, this is essential to sustainability of the farm.

The center's On-Farm Dairy Resource Team program can help farms put together the resources to help them troubleshoot problem areas keeping them from reaching their benchmarks.

For more information, call the center at 717-346-0849. To view the complete scorecard, visit the center's Web site at [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org). Click on the scorecard icon at the bottom of the home page.