

The Center Spotlight

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National Conference Confirms Susquehanna Youth's Career Path

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. — A turning point for Mackey Wright, 18, came last fall when he attended the National 4-H Dairy Conference in Madison, Wis.

"Before then, I was really hesitant about what I wanted to do when I grew up," he says. "I wasn't sure if the farm was where I wanted to be, but I didn't know what else I wanted to do either."

For Mackey, the National 4-H Dairy Conference confirmed his decision to return to his parents' 125-cow dairy farm in Montrose, Susquehanna County. "I just knew after attending that event the dairy industry was where I wanted to be," he says.

Mackey was one of six delegates who represented Pennsylvania at the national conference held during the last week of September. The state delegation was supported through a grant provided to the Center for Dairy Excellence by the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association.

The center and the Dairymen's Association are sponsoring the Pennsylvania delegation again this year, and applications are due July 21.

An amazing learning experience

The National 4-H Dairy Conference is one of many events Mackey has attended during his 10 years in the 4-H program. He has shown animals at the county, district, state and national level, and competed in the National Dairy Quiz Bowl in Louisville, Ky.

But the dairy conference is one event that really stands out for him. "You learn so much out there, and it is information you can bring back and use," he says. "Even if you're not from a farm, it is just a wonderful event to attend."

Mackey handles the mating program, oversees the calf and heifer facility, and feeds the cows on his family's dairy farm. "One thing that was really interesting was visiting the ABS facilities," he says.

"We use ABS bulls, and it was a lot of fun to see the actual bulls from that bull stud."

Mackey also enjoyed visiting NASCO, the Hoard's Dairyman facility, and the National Dairy Shrine. "One of the best things, though, was seeing all of the animals at World Dairy Expo."

"It was also fun to meet kids from all over the country, and the events were really well organized," he says. "I came back with a bunch of new ideas that we can actually use."

Mackey recently graduated from Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School and plans to attend Alfred State in New York to study dairy science this fall. "This conference reinforced my decision to study dairy science," he says.

An advocate for the program, Mackey encourages other 4-H members to apply to attend. "There is a lot of good information provided at the conference," he says. "Even the kids I know who are from the city were interested in it."

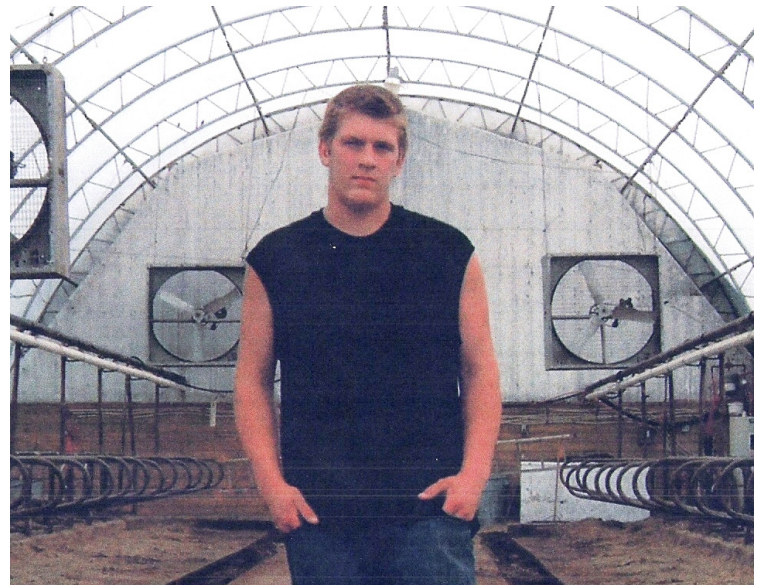
Applicants needed for this year's program

The deadline to apply to attend this year's National 4-H Dairy Conference is approaching quickly. Any 4-H member ages 15 - 19 may apply to attend the conference, scheduled Sept. 27 - 30. Those accepted into the program should plan to miss an entire week of school to attend.

Penn State's Department of Dairy and Animal Science is coordinating the application process. Each county 4-H program can nominate two 4-H members from their county to attend. All nominations must be submitted to Penn State through the local extension offices by **July 21**.

Finalists will be interviewed by a selection committee at Penn State's 4-H Achievement Days on **July 29**. Any finalist not attending Achievement Days will be interviewed by phone during that week.

More information about the National 4-H Dairy



Mackey Wright, Montrose, Susquehanna Co.

Conference can be found online at www.das.psu.edu. Click on "Dairy Cattle," under "4-H Programs." Or contact your local extension office or call Dale Olver at 814-863-3914.

More information on the National 4-H Dairy Conference and other dairy youth opportunities can be found on the Center for Dairy Excellence's Web site as well. Visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org and click on the "Educator" tab. Then click on "Find Dairy-Related Resources for Upper Level Students."

Along with the National 4-H Dairy Conference, the page highlights the Junior Dairy Management Conference held in conjunction with the All-American Dairy Show in September. This event provides an opportunity for dairy youth to test their dairy management knowledge and skills, evaluate top quality animals, and receive experience in evaluation and decision-making. The contest is open to all 4-H and FFA members.

For more details about either opportunity, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org or call the center at 717-346-0849.

Lower Somatic Cell Counts Result in Higher Premiums, Production

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The May edition of the Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard shows the state's average somatic cell counts up 2,500 over April levels, after steady declines the

past seven months. Average SCCs for the state are still down 6.6 percent from a year ago, at 271,000.

Lower SCC levels are a sign of improved milk quality, which can lead to increased milk production

and added monthly premiums. As summer months approach, maintaining lower somatic cell counts can be difficult in hotter weather.

If you are struggling with high somatic cell counts or would like to improve your milk quality in general, initiating a Target Team may be a good solution. The Target Team Program can provide funding and support to help you bring together advisors to evaluate your milk quality and make recommendations for improving it.

Herd management improving

Pennsylvania's dairy herds are showing improvements in several key herd performance characteristics this month. These improvements can lead to increased milk production and enhanced on-farm profitability.

The state still has room to improve in milk production per cow. Increasing milk output per cow is the most significant 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.

To see how your dairy compares to state trends and to view the complete scorecard online, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org. Click on the "Scorecard" icon at the bottom of the home page. The scorecard shows how the trends have changed over the past two years.

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	May 2008 Report	May 2009 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	548,000 cows	547,000 cows	-0.2%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.676 bill. lbs.	10.516 bill. lbs.	-1.4%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$19.50/cwt.	\$13.40/cwt.	-31.3%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 65 lbs. milk)	\$5.44/cwt.	\$4.29/cwt.	-21.2%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	64 lbs.	63 lbs.	-0.7%	80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	16%	17%	+3.9%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	21,090 lbs.	20,922 lbs.	-0.8%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	290,000	271,000	+6.6%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	32%	36%	+13.4%	
Average Days In Milk	195 Days	189 Days	+3.1%	185 Days
Average Age to First Calving	25.6 months	25.5 months	+0.5%	21-24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	92 Days	90 Days	+1.8%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	32.2%	33.0%		20-35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	18.02%	18.25%	+1.3%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	www.centerfordairyexcellence.org			

