



The Center Spotlight

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Bradford County Producer Forges Relationships in Harrisburg

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 Ron Kline, a dairy producer from Bradford County, signed up to participate in the Pennsylvania's Dairy Task Force's Dairy Day at the Capitol, he had no idea what to expect.

"I thought I was just going to visit with my local representative," he says. "I didn't know I was visiting with five different legislators and their staffers all in one day. But it was really great."

Kline, who milks 500 cows with his wife Kathryn and sons Glenn and Gary in Troy, Pa., says the experience is something he will never forget. "I was surprised at how receptive [the legislators and staffers] were once they knew we weren't there to attack them."

Telling them the dairy story

Kline joined other dairy producers and agri-business leaders to collectively meet with more than 20 legislative offices during the Dairy Day in June. "We wanted to make sure they didn't forget about agriculture all together in their budget, and we wanted to let them know what farmers are doing."

Kline made five individual visits that day. "I was surprised at how little they knew about the farmer," he says. "For instance, one person had a hard time believing that 'little Pennsylvania' is competing in a global dairy market."

"Another thing that surprised them is that every cow contributes \$13,737 to the local economy. They didn't realize how much dairy was worth to the community."

Kline says the legislators and their staffers asked a lot of really good questions, "after they realized we weren't mad at them," he says. "When I told them I was a dairy producer, their eyes were glued on me and the other dairy producers in the room."

"I would encourage every dairy producer to visit with their legislators," Kline says. "We need to get our concerns to them so they understand what is really going on. They don't know unless we tell them."

It doesn't matter whether milk prices are high or low, he says. "It is important to educate them all along because they are going to pass bills down the road that will affect us. If they don't know our side, of course they are going to take the word of other special interest groups."

Keeping agriculture in their view

Kline says many of the legislators he visited did not understand the connection between consumers and farmers. "Most of them don't think of farming as anything more than an occupation," he says. "They buy their groceries at the store, and they don't think farming has anything to do with that."

Although the Dairy Day event was Kline's first time at the state capitol, it wasn't his first experience with legislators. "I met my local senator, Gene Yaw, at the Bradford County Dairy Day, and I invited his assistant out to our farm so they could get an idea of what happened at the farm level. That went very well," he says.

"I used to think you had to be a professional to meet with your legislators, but you don't. They put their pants on the same way I do, and they really want to hear our perspective on things."

Help in reaching out to your legislators

Producers interested in building stronger relationships with their state and national legislative representatives can find help at the Center for Dairy Excellence's Web site.

Go to www.centerfordairyexcellence.org and click on "Producer," then on "Contact My Legislator." On that Web page, you will find a link to policy issues affecting dairy, as well as a link to a



Ron Kline, with sons Glenn and Gary, at Y-Run Farms.

Web site that will provide contact information for your local legislators. All that is needed to find local legislators is your zip code.

"The most important thing producers can do with legislators is share your perspective on the issues and talk about your individual business," says John Frey, executive director of the Center for Dairy Excellence.

"It is important that producers build long-lasting relationships with their local legislators so that when an issue arises, the legislator knows who the constituent is they can call to hear the dairy story," Frey says.

"You don't have to go to their office in Harrisburg or Washington, D.C., to meet with them," Frey says. "A lot of times the most effective visits are the ones that happen in your hometown district."

"Invite them to visit your farm or offer to stop by their local office," he says. "Share with them what you are doing to supply a quality product to the marketplace and why your business is a valuable part of the local community. They want to hear from constituents, and they need to hear from you."

More Pennsylvania Dairy Herds Maximizing Production Per Cow

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The June edition of the Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard shows a nearly 30-percent increase in the number of Pennsylvania's dairy herds producing more than 80

pounds per cow per day from last year's levels.

Although the average milk production per cow per day is unchanged from a year ago at 62 pounds, the number of dairy herds with more than 80

pounds increased by nearly 100 herds. This is a sign that more dairy farms are taking advantage of the resources available to help them maximize milk production per cow.

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	May 2008 Report	May 2009 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	546,000 cows	545,000 cows	-0.2%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.693 bill. lbs.	10.514 bill. lbs.	-1.7%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$20.30/cwt.	\$13.00/cwt.	-36.0%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 65 lbs. milk)	\$6.05/cwt.	\$4.33/cwt.	-28.5%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	62 lbs.	62 lbs.		80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	11%	14%	+28.8%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	21,136 lbs.	20,869 lbs.	-1.3%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	307,000	286,800	+6.6%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	29%	32%	+10.2%	
Average Days In Milk	197 Days	189 Days	+4.3%	185 Days
Average Age to First Calving	25.6 months	25.5 months	+0.3%	21—24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	91 Days	90 Days	+1.4%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	32.3%	33.0%		20—35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	17.72%	18.26%	+3.0%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	www.centerfordairyexcellence.org			

In lower milk-price periods, increasing milk production per cow is an ideal way to enhance your income without significantly increasing costs. In fact, studies show the difference between 60 and 80 pounds per cow per day could result in \$40,000 additional income per year, even at \$12 per hundredweight milk.

Resources available for your farm

Those farms that want to improve their milk production per cow or target another area such as reproduction, milk quality or even heifer management may benefit from forming a Target Team.

The Center for Dairy Excellence has \$3500 in support available and other resources to help put together a team of professionals to help fine-tune your dairy. For more information about the program, visit the "Producer" section of www.centerfordairyexcellence.org or call the center at 717-346-0849.

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 trends have changed over the past two years.

