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DART PARTICIPANTS SEE INNOVATION IN INDUSTRY, DISCUSS FINANCES, FORAGES

Meeting Notes Now Available on Dairy Center Web site

HARRISBURG – Sales and service representatives who recently attended one of five Dairy Advocacy and Resource Team, or DART, meetings hosted by the Center for Dairy Excellence and Pennsylvania Dairy Task Force saw the dairy industry’s innovation and entrepreneurship first-hand through a unique business within the retail, processing and service segments of the industry.

“This round of DART meetings gave us the opportunity to learn from these innovative companies and take home ideas we can use in our own roles within the dairy industry,” said John Frey, executive director of the Center for Dairy Excellence. “For example, the management team at the Walmart distribution center we toured credited its corporate beliefs for its low employee turn-over and operational success. Those beliefs – to respect all individuals, serve customers and strive for excellence – are beliefs we can apply to what we do daily in our own professions.”

The Walmart distribution center in Bedford, Pa., is the largest distribution center in the Walmart system, servicing 142 super stores and 30 Sam’s Club stores. Built in 1998, the center has earned Walmart’s “Warehouse of the Year” distinction for six out of the past nine years.

DART participants in south-central Pennsylvania toured the Schreiber’s Cheese plant in Shippensburg that specializes in cream cheese and yogurt production. Schreiber’s is the largest supplier of private-label cream cheese, much of which is made in the Shippensburg facility. Currently Schreiber’s is doubling the size of the plant to expand its yogurt business, which will increase its work force to 450 employees.

In Lancaster County, DART participants toured the Lancaster DHIA lab, where a new mastitis identification test using DNA technology was showcased.



Another DART tour was at Fraley's Auction House in Muncy, one of Pennsylvania's oldest and largest auction companies, and at Dean Farms in New Castle. Dean Farms is a 60-cow dairy where fresh raw milk and a variety of cheeses are available for purchase on-farm.

Each DART meeting featured a workshop that showed participants how to evaluate dairy farm cash flow reports to determine where dollars are being lost on the dairy farm. The workshop was presented by AgChoice Farm Credit and Acuity Advisors.

“It is vital that dairy farmers understand what is happening to their breakeven milk price and use risk management tools to stabilize wild swings in profitability,” AgChoice representatives told participants at each of the meetings. “In the future, they must have better records, be able to adapt to more frequent changes, have more liquidity and probably have less debt to survive.”

Attendees also reviewed a report on 2009 forage harvest and quality. Penn State extension educators presented the review, showing data gathered from about 480 samples of corn silage submitted from Pennsylvania farms in August and September. The average dry matter in the samples was about 34 percent, with about 8 percent crude protein. Each presenter emphasized that while the samples provided a good composite of the harvest, evaluation of home-grown forages should be done on an individual farm basis to account for inconsistency across farms.

Presentation hand-outs from the forage and cash flow discussions are available online at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org. Click on “Industry Rep.” and then on “See DART Meeting Summary,” or call the Center for Dairy Excellence at 717-346-0849.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is an initiative of the Department of Agriculture and was launched in January 2004 by Governor Edward G. Rendell. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center's mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more about the Center at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.