



The Center Spotlight

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Target Profit Team helps Somerset Co. dairy get back on track



Dr. David Welch (right) acts as the facilitator for the target profit team at Dovon Farms, a 700-cow dairy in Berlin, Somerset Co., owned by David Van Gilder (left) and his two sons Justin & Jason.

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.

BERLIN, Pa. — After expanding their herd from 400 cows to 700 cows in 2007, the Van Gilder family of Dovon Farms in Berlin, Somerset County, saw their cull rate escalate to 41 percent. The death toll in transition cows was high, and milk production had fallen from as high as 80 pounds prior to expansion to a mere 60.5 pounds a day.

"We knew to stay in business, we had to get it turned around," says David Van Gilder. "The Center for Dairy Excellence's Target Profit Team helped us get back on track."

Team provided focus

David and his twin sons, Justin and Jason, manage the dairy along with eight other full time employees. To establish their target profit team, they

enlisted the help of Dr. David Welch, a veterinarian from Berlin, who serves as the facilitator for the team.

"I help analyze the records and keep the lines of communications open with team members," Dr. Welch says. "A lot of monitoring went into the team, too. We monitor things day in and day out to make sure we are making progress."

When the Van Gilders expanded their operation, they brought in several different herds, and with those herds came challenges. "We were concerned with the transition cows, and we knew we had subclinical ketosis," Van Gilder says.

"The team provided focus," Dr. Welch adds. "Instead of trying to focus on cows in all lactation stages, we are focused on the transition cows. It keeps us on task."

The Van Gilders adjusted their feed ration for close-up dry cows and early fresh cows to address deficiencies. They also conducted forage analysis and beta-hydroxybutyrate testing.

The target profit team program provided a chance for the Van Gilders to bring in a consultant to work with Justin, the herd manager, to hone his herdsman skills. "The consultant really showed Justin how to evaluate the cows," Van Gilder says. "Without the profit team, we would not have had him come."

Turning things around

Dovon Farm's cull rate has dropped to 22.6 percent for the past nine months, and the percent

culled at 60 days or less is down to 4.8 percent. Death loss is at 4 percent for the past 9 months.

"The team really helped us do the things we needed to do to get our dairy running right to reduce death loss and cull rates," Van Gilder says. "It got all of us on the same page, so we were all working toward the same goal."

"I don't know if we would have turned things around on our own, but we definitely would not have turned them around as quickly," he says. "We thought we were doing okay [on our management], but the team and the consultant gave us ideas on how to do it better."

"That was important because I don't think we would still be here without those changes. They're practices that will help us way into the future."

New Guidelines and Funding Levels for 2010

The Center for Dairy Excellence has announced new guidelines and funding levels for its Dairy Farm Resource Team Program in 2010. The program offers resources and support for new and existing Dairy Profit Teams, Target Profit Teams and Succession Planning Teams.

The 2010 funding levels for the center's dairy resource team program are as follows:

- **Dairy Profit Team:** Up to \$1,500 for new teams or \$1,000 for existing teams.
- **Target Profit Team:** Up to \$1,000 for new teams or \$750 for existing teams for specific operational performance area review.
- **Dairy Succession Planning Team:** Up to \$2,000 for new teams and up to \$1,000 for existing teams.

The newly-revised program includes an annual application process to allow the center to provide better administration and support to the program.

Copies of the application and new funding guidelines were mailed to all dairy farms currently enrolled in the center's profit team program. Dairy farms not currently enrolled in the program but interested in establishing a team can call 717-346-0849 or e-mail info@centerfordairyexcellence.org.

Increase in Daily Milk Production Fueling Pennsylvania Supply

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Despite a drop of 6,000 head in Pennsylvania's dairy herd, monthly milk production in September was up 1.0 percent. Fueling this increase is a 2.1 percent increase in daily milk

production per cow. The state's rolling 12-month average is still down 1.3 percent from a year ago.

Hidden behind the increase in milk production per cow are improvements in the state herd's somatic

cell counts, pregnancy rates and age at first calving. Milk quality has improved by more than 28 percent since last September, and pregnancy levels are up 13 percent from a year ago.

Average days in milk are down by 4 days, while the age at first calving dropped slightly. Days to first service also dropped by 2 days.

Pennsylvania's share of the U.S. milk market increased nearly 2 percent in September, as the nation's milk supply continues to decline, down 0.7 percent.

Reach Your Benchmarks

The Center for Dairy Excellence has funding resources available to help farms reach their own benchmarks relating to production, performance and profitability.

Along with the newly-revised Dairy Farm Resource Team Program, the center offers educational events, such as the Dairy Profitability Forum in the fall and the Mastering the Dairy Business Conference Calls held regularly throughout the year. To learn more about the center's resources, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.

The complete Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard can be found by clicking on the "Scorecard" icon at the bottom right corner of the Center for Dairy Excellence homepage.

For more information, call the Center for Dairy Excellence at 717-346-0849.

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	Sept. 2008 Report	Sept. 2009 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	548,000 cows	542,000 cows	-1.1%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.667 bill. lbs.	10.532 bill. lbs.	-1.3%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$20.50/cwt.	\$14.10/cwt.	-31.2%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 100 lbs. milk)	\$8.15/cwt.	\$6.17/cwt.	-24.3%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	59 lbs.	60 lbs.	+2.1%	80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	6%	8%	+25.7%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	21,166 lbs.	20,985 lbs.	-0.9%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	334,000	305,190	+8.6%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	23%	29%	+28.4%	
Average Days In Milk	193 Days	189 Days	+2.3%	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	89 Days	+2.0%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	33.0%	33.7%		20—35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	15.85%	18.04%	+13.8%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	www.centerfordairyexcellence.org			