



For Immediate Release

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2023 PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY INDUSTRY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Felix, Mayer and Moore Were Recognized at the 2023 PA Dairy Summit

Harrisburg, Pa. – At this year’s Pennsylvania Dairy Summit, the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania, Center for Dairy Excellence, and Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association awarded three dairy professionals with the 2023 Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Awards. The annual awards program recognizes dairy professionals who showcase leadership, service, and excellence across the state’s dairy industry.

All applications were reviewed by an awards committee of dairy producers and industry professionals. Nominees were evaluated for their contributions to the industry and letters of support from their peers and fellow dairy producers.

“This year’s award recipients all have one thing in common: they are passionate about education and continuous learning. They each work day in and day out to share their experience with students, other dairy producers, and the community at large,” said Emily Barge, Communications and Marketing Manager at the Center, who oversees the award program. “They represent our industry’s commitment to service, innovation, and excellence. We enjoyed celebrating their accomplishments last week at the Dairy Summit.”

Congratulations to the following dairy professionals who were honored at the 2023 PA Dairy Summit:

Dr. Tara Felix, Beef Cattle Specialist at Penn State Extension, received the Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator Award. Dr. Tara Felix has been with The Pennsylvania State University and Penn State Extension for seven years as the Beef Cattle Specialist, providing innovative research and contributions to the dairy and beef industry in Pennsylvania. Dr. Felix’s work is centered on providing the most favorable genetics and nutrition for the F1 beef x Holstein crossbreds. With dairy cattle representing a considerable supply of calves for the feeding/production market, Dr. Felix works to help dairy producers consider how to make these calves marketable to the beef industry.

Through Dairy x Beef research and a Dairy Beef Initiative, Dr. Felix has led four feedlot demonstrations at the PA Department of Agriculture Livestock Evaluation Center. During those projects, she has successfully supported several Extension programs, including: one statewide program she developed that evaluated the 2016 dairy beef demonstrations; three popular press and four Extension articles; 15 Extension meetings; three invited presentations; four years of Ag Progress Days tours; and one PhD student/thesis. Dr. Felix has shared her notable research with large groups across the country in places

such as Michigan and South Dakota. Her research has even produced conversations from other countries like Saudi Arabia.

To stay current in research, she serves as an ad-hoc reviewer for several scientific publications. She has published 28 peer-reviewed articles nationally during her time at Penn State. In 2018, she received the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Teaching Award of Merit. In 2021, Penn State Extension awarded Dr. Felix with the Extension Director Award for Impact: Individual Programming because of the national and international reach for the Dairy Beef Initiative and the Beef X Dairy research.

“I feel that it is my passion for agriculture that ultimately makes me a successful Extension Specialist. Consequently, I try to approach each new opportunity with the same enthusiasm that I first approached research and science,” Dr. Felix shared after receiving the award. “I distinctly recall an epiphany from my doctoral work where I thought, ‘Wow! Science rocks!’ It is my personal goal to bring those epiphanies to the dairy and beef producers of PA so they can say, ‘Wow! We rock! Our jobs are really important.’”

Darrin Mayer, Dairy Manager at Delaware Valley University, received the Pennsylvania Dairy Service Award. Darrin Mayer has served as the Dairy Manager at Delaware Valley University for the past 22 years. The dairy farm at Delaware Valley University is home to a milking herd of 50-60 mature cows and about 50 head of young stock. Darrin’s staff consists of student workers with varying skillsets and experiences. A large percentage of those students have never set foot on a dairy or been responsible for calves, heifers, milking animals, feed preparation or animal health. Darrin ensures the dairy is primarily a learning laboratory not only for the students who work there, but for the students attending classes there as well. With these teaching responsibilities, Darrin also makes sure the herd is healthy, production is optimal, and the somatic cell count remains one of the top in Bucks County. With the constant change in people and students milking the cows, being able to maintain these high standards while building a positive learning environment is a significant accomplishment.

Darrin not only trains college students in basic farm management through practical, hands-on application on the University’s dairy farm, but he also teaches several Dairy Science courses that cover dairy systems and management, dairy software, husbandry techniques, and Artificial Insemination techniques. Darrin has helped redesign the University’s dairy curriculum to match today’s changing industry by including more business courses while maintaining the hands-on learning aspect. He is actively involved in the local dairy community by offering advice, sharing research for problems they may encounter, and educating and promoting the dairy industry through local events and at the PA Farm Show each year.

Darrin has also served as one of the dairy producers and University representatives on the Pennsylvania Secure Milk Supply Stakeholder Board to offer Emergency Management Contingency Planning Recommendations for the PA dairy industry. He has been involved with Mock Disease Outbreak training with his students along with FBI and Homeland Security basic training of several agents for bioterrorism on dairy farms.

“I really enjoy training, educating, and helping anyone involved with the dairy industry to be the best versions of themselves and make a positive impact in the agriculture industry as a whole. I strive to keep updated on the newest technology in the industry and implement it whenever possible,” Darrin shared after receiving the award.

Walt Moore of Walmoore Holsteins in West Grove, Pa., received the Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer Award. Walt Moore is a fourth-generation dairy farmer who has owned and operated his dairy business for 30 years. Walmoore Holsteins was established in 1909, and with Walt's progressive vision and leadership, he has grown the operation from 20 cows and 128 acres to 1,050 cows along with 1,800+ acres. Walt has also expanded and modernized his operation with new facilities and has built a team of employees that shares his passion, vision and positive attitude. He is always looking for ways to improve his dairy farm whether it is new animal husbandry techniques, genetics or better conservation efforts. In 2020, Walmoore Holsteins was awarded the Dairying for Tomorrow award for environmental stewardship by American Dairy Association Northeast.

Outside of his busy schedule on the farm, Walt is heavily involved in the dairy industry and his local community. He helped found the Pennsylvania Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) and served two terms on the board as well as a year as president. Currently, Walt is in his fourth year on the Dairy Excellence Foundation Board of Directors where he now serves as president. He also serves on the Chester County Conservation District Board of Directors as the dairy-focused director and serves as the president of the American Dairy Coalition (ADC), a grassroots federal dairy-focused policy group led by dairy farmers. Walt also serves on a Land O'Lakes "focus group" and is a member of the Horizon Farm Credit Customer Advisory Committee.

In addition to his active involvement across the industry, Walt helped to launch the On-Farm Internship Program, serves as a host farm for Discover Dairy's 'Adopt a Cow' Program, and serves on the steering committee for the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program. Walt and his team have partnered with the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center Veterinary Hospital over the last few years to host students, interns and consultants.

"I am very metric and goal-oriented. We can measure so many things in dairy farming and crop farming, and I'm driven to improve those metrics. I'm also driven to be a great neighbor in our community," Walt shared after receiving the award. "My passion for dairy farming is just ingrained in me. I told my parents when I was six years old that I was going to Penn State to study agriculture and come home to take over the farm. I never wavered."

The Dairy Industry Awards are offered annually to Pennsylvania residents. Qualified applicants stay in the nomination pool for three years after being submitted for consideration. Nominators can update the nomination each of the two years following their original submission. Once a candidate is honored as a winner in an award category, they or individuals representing them are not eligible to win in any other category for two subsequent years. Nominations for next year's award program will open in the fall of 2023.

For more information about the awards program, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/awards or call the Center at 717-346-0849.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. 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 at centerfordairyexcellence.org.

Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) is a farmer-driven organization advancing our State's dairy industry through improved productivity and economic viability with continued stewardship of our animals, environment and community. To become a member go to www.pdmp.org or email membership@pdmp.org.

The Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association is the oldest dairy group in Pennsylvania. The Dairymen's Milkshake is the top-selling food item at the Food Court. The Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association has been supporting "Fill a Glass with Hope®" with agriculture partners, Feeding PA, American Dairy Association North East, corporate partners and food banks since 2015. Over the past three years, the PA Dairymen have donated more than \$1.4 million to programs including The Calving Corner; agricultural and educational projects; initiatives and scholarships; the Fill A Glass with Hope® fresh milk campaign for neighbors in need; the Choose PA Dairy consumer education and awareness campaign; the PA Farm Bureau Mobile Ag Education Lab that travels to schools; and the PA Dairy Princess and Promotion Program. Their philanthropic efforts build a brighter future for all Pennsylvanians. For more information, visit www.padairymens.com.