



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPLORE CAREERS IN VETERINARY MEDICINE**

*The Dairy Excellence Foundation and The University of Pennsylvania Veterinary Team Partnered to Host Exploration Experiences*

**Harrisburg, Pa.** – During the 2024-25 school year, the Dairy Excellence Foundation and Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow (DLT) program partnered with The University of Pennsylvania Veterinary team to host multiple “Exploration Experiences” for high school students. The goal of these day-long events was to give high school students a firsthand look at careers in veterinary medicine by helping them meet veterinarians, assigning them hands-on labs, exposing them to technology, and allowing them to tour progressive dairy operations and veterinary clinics. These Exploration Experiences are hosted on an annual basis through Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow, a program designed specifically to prepare high school students to work in the dairy industry, with funding from the University of Pennsylvania.

“We’ve found that students entering the veterinary medicine field often have this picture of what they think it’s like, but they haven’t really experienced it. The idea with these events was to give them an idea of what these careers are like before they make that commitment,” shared Dr. Joe Bender, Associate Professor of Clinical Dairy Production Medicine at the Center for Animal Health and Productivity at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine – New Bolton Center. “We wanted to expose them to the actual veterinary medicine technology side, so partners like Quakertown Veterinary Clinic were really important. We heard really good feedback from students on how they enjoyed talking one-on-one with veterinarians and then getting tours of the veterinary hospital to see what an actual day looks like.”

During the first Exploration Experience, students toured the University of Pennsylvania’s New Bolton Center and Marshak Dairy, the University’s dairy farm for education and research. They completed hands-on labs to explore herd health and learned about colostrum quality, nutrition research, TMR testing, and cow health. They also networked with students and professionals who specialize in specific areas of veterinary science.

“I work in emergency and critical care as a vet assistant. It was incredible to get large animal, hands-on experience because I only work with your everyday dogs and cats. I want

to go into mixed practice, so this was really cool to see,” shared Emma, a high school student who attended the event and has a strong interest in veterinary medicine.

During the second event, high school students toured Quakertown Veterinary Clinic and Darkhorse Dairy Farm to explore different careers in veterinary science and dairy production. They completed hands-on activities involving feed identification, milk quality and culturing, and cow health where they listened to the heart, rumen, and lungs of dairy cows.

“Like most of our students, I didn’t grow up with an agricultural background. I didn’t touch any cows until I was in high school or college. Through grants and funding for on-farm events like these, it exposed me to this side of agriculture and really inspired me to be where I am today,” shared Dr. Payton Smith, an Associate Large Animal Veterinarian at Quakertown Veterinary Services. “I’m super thrilled to give these students hands-on experience and give back to inspire the next generation involved in agriculture.”

The mission for the DLT Exploration Experiences is to provide students and youth interested in dairy the opportunity to utilize formal education skills in hands-on experimental learning experiences. In addition, the DLT Exploration Experiences are designed to cultivate interest in a variety of careers available in the dairy industry.

“These types of on-farm experiences are extremely important. I’ve always lived by the mantra of, ‘I never let my schooling get in the way of my education.’ Getting students out to these opportunities gives them hands-on experience and allows them to use the knowledge they learn in class in a practical setting on the farm,” shared Nick Isenberg, an agriculture educator at Milton Hershey School.

By encouraging high school students to see firsthand the techniques that they learn in the classroom applied in real-world settings, they are better equipped to engage in STEM learning and explore agricultural-focused career opportunities.

“All the activities were very hands-on, so my students were engaged in the learning vs. being lectured to. Many of my students were greatly impacted and shared their experiences with their vet science classmates,” shared Ayla Blatt, an agriculture educator at Kutztown High School.

Multiple Exploration Experiences will be offered this school year at no cost to teachers who are enrolled in the free Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow program. To sign up for the DLT program this school year or share it with an agriculture educator you know, visit [www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com](http://www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com). If you have questions about the program, contact Michelle Shearer at [mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org) or by phone at 570-768-8316.

Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow is a program managed by the Dairy Excellence Foundation and designed specifically to prepare high school students to work in the dairy industry. Learn more about the Foundation at [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/foundation](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/foundation).

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The Center for Dairy Excellence Foundation of Pennsylvania is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax deductible organization that is Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) approved. Established in 2010, the foundation's mission is to build and invest in programs that cultivate and empower the next generation of producers, consumers, and advocates for the Pennsylvania dairy industry. Learn more at [centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/](http://centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/).

Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow (DLT) is a program designed specifically to prepare high school students to work in the dairy industry. A three-part model program, Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow offers classroom instruction, on-farm experiences and scholarship opportunities. The DLT curriculum includes four main courses: Introduction to Dairy, Introduction to Dairy Herd Management, Introduction to Dairy Business Management, and Introduction to Dairy Technologies. The program is managed by the Center for Dairy Excellence Foundation of Pennsylvania, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax deductible organization that is Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) approved. Learn more about the program at [www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com](http://www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com).

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