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NEW PODCAST EPISODE FEATURES CONVERSATION ABOUT FARM ACCIDENT WITH PA DAIRY FARMER

Brett Reinford Opens Up About a Farm Accident and the Importance of Farm Safety

Harrisburg, Pa. – With September 19 marking the start of National Farm Safety and Health Week, Brett Reinford of Reinford Farms in Juniata County, Pennsylvania shared his story about a farm accident he experienced last year. In the Center for Dairy Excellence’s 11th episode of the [“Cow-Side Conversations” podcast](#), Reinford described how the accident shaped his perspective on farm safety and the tools his family uses to protect themselves and their employees. During the second half of the podcast episode, he also shared how methane digesters are impacting their operation with new revenue streams. The Reinfords milk approximately 800 cows and farm about 1,400 acres.

Reinford opened the podcast by describing the farm accident that occurred last year. He was helping set up drag line equipment when a cap on a hydrant exploded due to pressure that had built up on the line underground. Throughout the podcast, he reflected on the day of the accident, his injuries, and the multiple surgeries he had on his fingers and knee.

“There was pressure that built up underground, which I was not aware of. The strap came around and caught my fingers and my kneecap. When I woke up, I remember 30-40 feet of manure shooting in the air because there was still that much pressure on the line,” Reinford said. “I remember asking what happened over and over again. Then I thought, ‘This should have killed me. Thank you, Lord, that I’m still alive.’ I’m not fully recovered, nor will I ever be, but I’m alive and well and I’m grateful for that.”

Reinford says his family has always been committed to farm safety, but since the accident, they have added robust trauma tools and equipment to help team members if they are ever faced with serious accidents like his. He also learned the importance of being aware of safety implications and not trying to makeshift quick fixes without ensuring equipment includes the proper safety precautions.

“We like to build and do a lot of our own things. That particular cap had a homemade pressure release valve on it. I think the big thing is, if there are safety [tools] out there, use those rather than going cheap and trying to build your own,” he shared.

Throughout the 800-cow dairy operation, Reinford's main areas of focus for farm safety include the manure pits, trenches, grain bins, and cow management. He keeps safety at the forefront by implementing the following safety protocols:

- **Displaying safety signs.** "It's quite easy to be safe on the farm if you do the simple things like putting up signage and stickers on your farm about potential dangers. I have safety signs on our facility near the grain bins and manure pit, so employees might be a little more conscious."
- **Committing to open communication.** "When we have an employee meeting, one of the first things we ask them is, 'Are there any safety issues you have seen when you're working with the cows, in the barns, and on the equipment?' We pick up on things just by asking people what they are seeing that's a safety hazard."
- **Training new employees with farm safety in mind.** "When we hire new employees and put them in equipment, we make sure our best, most well-trained employee also trains them about some of the safety things that could happen."
- **Learning from others.** "I like to ask other farmers questions. It's usually a learning experience for us all. I was at a mill last week and they had an issue with their grain elevator. They have some safety protocols that they use, and as I was talking to him, I learned something about grain bins. So, I shared that with our team and everyone else who works with our grain bins."
- **Avoiding taking the easy way out.** "When we see something that's not safe, we don't look away and hope it fixes itself. We're pretty active and engaged in making sure things are as safe as they can be on our farm. When our employees tell us there is a safety concern, it becomes a major thing that gets fixed right away. We don't push it to the back burner."
- **Starting with the simple things.** "Most incidents on the farm, even the accident that I had, are entirely preventable. It's just proper training, common sense, and making sure people have the right abilities to run the machines they're operating. Start with the simple things. They often don't cost a lot, and they can save you a lot of money. I'm well over \$200,000 on the incident I had on my farm, and it was entirely preventable."

In addition to farm safety, the Reinford family focuses on sustainability and has two methane digesters on their operation. In the last half of the podcast, Reinford discussed the additional revenue streams and areas of opportunity they have discovered, including adding food waste and reducing odor to improve community relations. They also save money by sending manure through a press and using the bedding for the cows. Along with cost savings, the digesters allow them to commit to environmental sustainability by using the heat from their motors to warm the water in their barns, shop, and even the calf barn in the winter. Reinford says they do not purchase any fossil fuels for heating.

"We run two digesters and have the capacity to produce enough power for about 500 homes. It has given us a wonderful opportunity to talk about sustainability on the farm. We always talk about dairy first, but then mention how farms can be sustainable if they think outside the box," he said.

The digesters have also led to a new food waste revenue stream. Last year, Reinford Farms managed approximately 15,000 tons of packaged food waste. According to Reinford, methane digesters can be beneficial to many dairy operations, but they require team members who are invested in making sure they work properly.

“Figure out who’s going to run it on your farm, and have someone who is passionate about it. Having someone who can baby these things is really what needs to happen. They are a beast of their own and they can take a lot of your time if they’re not working appropriately,” he added.

To listen to the full podcast interview, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/podcast. The podcast is also available on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), and [Amazon Music](#). With a new episode released each month, Reinford’s interview is the 11th in the series. The podcast was designed to share real-time farmer insight, tricks of the trade, and inspiring stories from dairies across Pennsylvania.

To help dairy producers commit to farm safety, the Center for Dairy Excellence has sets of safety signs available at no cost. The signs come in packs of six and include messages about potential safety hazards such as chemicals, gasses, silage falling, and more. There is a blank sign included in the pack for farms to display messages that might be unique to their operation. To request a free pack of safety signs to be mailed to you while supplies last, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/safety-signs or call 717-346-0849.

The Center for Dairy Excellence also helps facilitate a Dairy Digester Discussion Group where Pennsylvania dairy farmers share their experiences with digesters. To join the group or learn more, contact Jayne Sebright at jsebright@centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 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.

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