

CDE DAIRY MARKETS & MANAGEMENT UPDATE

All prices — JAN. 14, 2026 — except where noted

Providing clear expectations: When most producers think about managing risks on their dairy, they think about milk price and margins, weather and crop loss risks, animal health issues, and maybe even farm safety concerns. They don't always think about how to manage against the risk of losing a key employee on the farm to another opportunity. While employee turnover happens in every business, sometimes employees leave simply because they are feeling lost, confused, or like they can't succeed in their current role. Some of that frustration could be remedied by setting clear expectations for each employee on your dairy.

A Gallup poll supports the need to set clear expectations, reporting that clearly outlined expectations can reduce employee turnover by 22 percent. The same poll shows that clear expectations lead to a 29 percent decrease in safety incidents. Setting clear expectations for your employees can also help enhance productivity on your farm, reduce conflicts that can arise, and increase overall job satisfaction. Most of us want to know that we are doing a good job. If the expectations for their job are constantly changing or are confusing, it can lead to frustration on both the employee and employer's part.

Everyone's ability to interpret a role or set of tasks is different based on their own perception and level of understanding. Providing clearly written job descriptions and well developed standard operating procedures (or protocols) can bring clarity to the confusion and close communication gaps between the employer and employee. Language and comprehension barriers can prevent an employee from clearly understanding what your expectations are. Different learning styles can also limit an employee's ability to understand expectations.

Three ways you can provide clear expectations to an employee are by providing a detailed job description for each position on the farm, developing clearly written protocols and procedures for every task on the farm, and taking the time to do regular one on ones and team meetings.

1) Clearly written job descriptions. Most farms do not have job descriptions for the different positions on the farm. Most of the time, employees are trained by another employee who walks them through the tasks and verbally explains what they should do. As employees come and go, the expectations may change based on the interpretation of the person explaining the role. A job description provides in writing what that employee is expected to do, what tasks are involved in the position, and what skills and education are required for the role. Job descriptions should also be reviewed and rewritten as job expectations change.

tions change.

2) Well-developed SOPs and farm protocols.

On farms where the same person milks every day and the same person feeds calves every day, having written protocols for those tasks may not be as important. But what happens if that person leaves or if that person gets sick? Writing protocols for each job on the farm helps provide consistency in your operation, which provides many benefits including increased productivity and efficiency. If you have multiple milkers, take a little time to study how each person preps and milks the cows. I would not be surprised if you find that every person does it a little bit differently. If you have the steps you want them to follow clearly written out, there is less room for interpretation and procedure drift. Remember, too, that some of your employees may not comprehend things the way you do, so providing photos with instructions can make it easier for employees to understand.

3) Regular one-on-ones and team meetings. Most farmers are "get-it-done" type of people, so the idea of a lot of meetings doesn't sound appealing. However, taking the time to meet with your employees individually gives them the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on where they are struggling. It can also help you provide more clarity around expectations. One on ones do not need to be super structured. It can simply be a 15-minute discussion where you ask what they are feeling good about, what is challenging them, what they need more clarity on, and how you can better support them as their boss. You can use the same four questions in a team meeting, and their collective feedback can help you better clarify your expectations.

If you're interested in learning more about workforce, herd, or business management by networking with other producers or through engaging sessions with industry professionals, consider joining us for the 2026 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit. Hosted by the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania and Center for Dairy Excellence, the Summit will be held on Feb. 4-5 in Grantville, PA. The program is packed with speakers and various program tracks that will help you and your farm to find your True North. With producer-led sessions on relevant, real-time issues, attendees can drill down their strengths, network with peers, and discover their passion. Dairy producers can attend the full, two-day Dairy Summit for a discounted rate of \$100, with one-day rates available. To register or check out the program, visit www.padairysummit.org.



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Prices change daily. This market information is an example for educational purposes. The market data shown below are compiled weekly by Farmshine, via CME & USDA reports.

CME DAILY FUTURES & OPTIONS TRADING — JAN. 14, 2026 AT THE CLOSE

	JAN-26	FEB-26	MAR-26	APR-26	MAY-26	JUN-26	JUL-26	AUG-26	SEP-26	OCT-26	NOV-26	DEC-26	TREND				
CLASS III MILK FUTURES (\$/CWT) vs. 2 weeks ago: <i>Jan-Jun26 down 25 to 55¢, Jul-Dec26 weak to 10¢ lower.</i>	14.74	14.87	15.04	15.58	16.17	16.71	17.18	17.46	17.69	17.69	17.63	17.19	↓				
CLASS IV MILK FUTURES (\$/CWT) vs. 2 weeks ago: <i>Jan down 5¢, rest of board 10 to 30¢ higher, spots up 50¢.</i>	13.40	13.96	14.64	14.68	14.89	15.20	15.50	15.68	16.02	16.20	16.24	16.30	↑				
CORN FUTURES (\$/BU)	MAR-26	MAY-26	JUL-26	SEP-26	DEC-26	MAR-27	MAY-27	JUL-27	SEP-27	DEC-27	MAR-28	MAY-28	JUL-28	TREND			
	4.236	4.312	4.380	4.366	4.494	4.632	4.700	4.734	4.582	4.630	4.736	4.786	4.802	↓			
SOYMEAL FUTURES (\$/TON)	JAN-26	MAR-26	MAY-26	JUL-26	AUG-26	SEP-26	OCT-26	DEC-26	JAN-27	MAR-27	MAY-27	JUL-27	AUG-27	TREND			
	287.2	293.7	298.4	303.5	305.5	306.8	307.2	311.6	313.3	315.5	316.7	320.1	320.4	↓			
U.S. AVG PREMIUM ALFALFA & ALFALFA/GRASS HAY 20-22% CP - Source: <i>USDA Monthly National Dairy Comprehensive Report</i>	AUG-24	SEP-24	OCT-24	NOV-24	DEC-24	JAN-25	FEB-25	MAR-25	APR-25	MAY-25	JUN-25	JUL-25	AUG-25	SEP-25	OCT-25	*NOV-25	TREND
	196.44	199.57	206.63	192.20	184.82	184.49	189.60	195.30	195.50	187.01	188.00	195.00	202.00	179.00	192.00	*202.00	↑

DMC	JUL-24	AUG-24	SEP-24	OCT-24	NOV-24	DEC-24	JAN-25	FEB-25	MAR-25	APR-25	MAY-25	JUN-25	JUL-25	AUG-25	SEP-25	OCT-25	*NOV-25
MARGIN	12.33	13.72	15.57	15.17	14.29	13.38	13.85	13.12	11.55	10.42	10.40	11.10	10.94	11.52	10.87	10.52	*10.04
ALL MILK	22.80	23.60	25.50	25.20	24.20	23.30	24.10	23.60	22.00	21.00	21.30	21.30	20.80	20.90	20.40	20.00	*19.70
FEED \$	10.47	9.88	9.93	10.03	9.91	9.92	10.25	10.48	10.45	10.58	10.90	10.20	9.86	9.38	9.53	9.48	*9.66

DAIRY COMMODITIES - GLOBAL BIWEEKLY Internet Auction (\$/LB) 01/06/26	U.S. CME SPOT DAILY (\$/LB) 01/14/26	U.S. WEEKLY USDA NDPSR (\$/LB) WK ENDING 01/10/26*
Weighted Avg. 1 to 6 mo. FORWARD CONTRACTS per metric ton converted to \$/LB	Prev. 5 day Lds	FMMO PROD
NEXT GDT Auction 01/20/26	Spot price	MIL. LBS
ALL-PRODUCT INDEX 1.6029↑ 6.3%	Weekly Avg	WTED AVG \$
BUTTER 2.3620↑ 3.8%	NET VALUE	NET VALUE
MILKFEAT (AMF) 2.7273↑ 7.4%	CHEDDAR-40 1.2850↓ 1.2842↓	BUTTER 3.0
BUTTER MILK POWDER 1.3734↑ 5.1%	CHEDDAR-500 0.13600↓ 1.4000↓	CHEESE-40 12.5
MOZZARELLA (BULK) 1.5508↑ 0.7%	DRY WHEY 3	CHEESE-500 REPORT ENDED
WHOLE POWDER (WMP) 1.5458↑ 7.2%		DRY WHEY 5.6

ANNOUNCED FEDERAL ORDER PRICES (\$/CWT)	NASS ALL-MILK (\$/CWT)	CURRENT FEDERAL ORDER VALUES (\$/LB) * = NEW
CL I ADV ↓	CL I SKIM ↓	*WEIGHTED AVG. 4-WK DEC. 1-27, 2025
16.35(JAN)	11.17(JAN)	PRODUCT VALUE * (New Make Allow vs Old) NET VALUE
	*14.41(DEC)	*DEC. 2025 COMPONENTS
	*15.86(DEC)	*CHEESE 1.5271↓ *(0.2519) 0.2003 1.2752↓
	*13.64(DEC)	*BUTTER 1.5287↓ *(0.2272) 0.1715 1.3015↓
	*19.70(NOV) ↓	*NFDM 1.1541↓ *(0.2393) 0.1678 0.9148↓
	*19.30(NOV)	*DRYWHEY 0.6893↑ *(0.2668) 0.1991 0.4225↑

U.S. AVG. BRED COWS & HEIFERS (3rd trimester) per head as reported by USDA Monthly National Dairy Comprehensive Report	U.S. AVG. FRESH/MILKING COWS per head as reported by USDA Monthly National Dairy Comprehensive Report
OCT-24	NOV-24
N/A	2250
N/A	N/A
N/A	2921(ttd)
N/A	N/A
N/A	2650
N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A
N/A	2600
N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A

CATTLE - DAIRY PURPOSES(\$/HD) USDA and other auction reports combined 4-week rolling average as of DEC. 18, 2025									
MILK COWS (NASS) U.S. Avg.	MILKING HEIFERS: Springing	Bred	BxD	OPEN: 300-600 lbs	BXD	600-900 lbs	BXD	900-1100 lbs	BULLS (800-1300lbs)
*\$3110 Q3-25 ↑	\$3010 Q2-25	3200	3100	2500	3000	1400	N/A	1900	2100
\$2600 Q3-24	\$2300 Q2-24	3200	3100	2800	2200	1200	1500	1400	2000

PA Auction Markets Jan. 8-13, 2026	FED STEERS (\$/CWT LIVELWEIGHT)	Holstein	Beef-X-Dairy	2 WKS AGO	YR AGO
CULL MARKET COWS (\$/CWT LIVELWEIGHT)	Choice & Prime 1250-1550 lb	203.00↓	227.60↑	203.00	225.00
Premium White	Bull Calves: No. 1 & 2, 90-130 lbs	1150.00↓	1410.00↑	1200.00	1400.00
Breakers	(\$/cwt livelweight) 70- 85 lbs	1280.00↑	1685.00↑	1275.00	1625.00
Boners				1625.00	650.00
Lean				1000.00	

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