CDE DAIRY MARKETS & MANAGEMENT UPDATE

All prices — **April 15, 2026** — except where noted

How record cattle prices and beef-on-dairy transformed dairy calf values

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What was once an afterthought with minimal return has become a meaningful source of income. Beef x dairy cross calf prices continue to soar in the U.S., rising from $200 to more than $1,600 per calf over the past five years. This changes the discussion around margin and profitability at the farm level. As calf prices climb in tandem with record-high cattle markets, dairies are now compelled to pay closer attention to these markets than ever before, reshaping how operations view and manage their calves.

How did we get to this point of near record high beef prices? It started with a structural shortage in the cattle industry. Multi-year droughts in major cattle-producing states left producers without forage. The beef heifer inventory dropped drastically, as cattle producers sold off heifers. More recently, the spread of New World Screwworm into Mexico shut down the Mexico-U.S. border to feeder cattle imports. Mexico's pipeline of 1.4 million head of cattle per year into the U.S. vanished overnight. These factors, among others, have left the U.S. cattle inventory at (or near) its lowest level since 1951.

While these supply factors were building, beef-on-dairy breeding was gaining steam. Genetics for Angus-Holstein crosses were improving drastically, and feed yards and beef packers were impressed by the performance of these animals. A bonus is that dairies can produce a consistent number of calves every single day, while the traditional cow-calf sector operates in seasonal cycles. Pair this with the severe cattle shortage in the U.S., and you have a massive solution for a massive problem.

Today, the CME feeder cattle market is knocking on the door of all-time highs, supported by supply shortage and spectacular consumer demand for beef. Generally speaking, ground beef costs $9 per pound and chicken costs $3 per pound. Despite this wide price spread, the protein source that continues to gain market share is beef.

Where does the market go from here? The cattle market historically revolves around a much more structural, less variable supply situation than dairy. Cycles of short and long supply typically last three to four years, depending on outside factors. USDA reports have shown the very beginning of herd rebuilding, but placement numbers have lacked the prolonged magnitude the current herd requires. Beef-on-dairy is certainly playing a role, with some estimates claiming over 5 million crossbred calves will hit the ground in 2026.

From a dairy perspective, depending on how aggressive the operation has been, beef sales (calves and culls) account for roughly $3 per hundredweight of income. How can producers protect that income? Dairies are now able to buy insurance on their calves and cull cows via Livestock Risk Protection (LRP). LRP is a government-subsidized program designed to protect cattle producers from sudden price drops. The tool functions in a similar way to the Dairy Revenue Protection program. Dairies pay a premium to cover a specific amount of cattle from a sudden drop in price, and that includes both calves and culls.

Taken together, tight cattle supplies, strong beef demand and the rise of beef-on-dairy genetics have permanently increased the value of dairy-origin calves. What was once a minor byproduct is now a meaningful revenue stream tied directly to broader cattle market cycles. As volatility persists, risk management tools and closer alignment with beef markets will continue to hold importance for dairy producers. Talk to your broker/agent about how you can utilize risk management tools to protect your business.

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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 — APR. 15, 2026 AT THE CLOSE

APR-26	MAY-26	JUN-26	JUL-26	AUG-26	SEP-26	OCT-26	NOV-26	DEC-26	JAN-27	FEB-27	MAR-27	TREND

CLASS III MILK FUTURES ($/CWT) vs. week ago: *Apr26 dn 15¢, May-Dec26 up 25-50¢, Jan27 steady, Feb-Mar27 dn 10 to 30¢.* — *12-Month Avg. 18.20* ↑↑

16.97	17.45	18.30	18.75	19.05	19.15	19.15	18.82	18.33	17.54	17.50	17.44	↑↑

CLASS IV MILK FUTURES ($/CWT) vs. week ago: *Apr26 dn 30¢, May-Sep26 $1 to $2 higher, Oct26-Mar27 up 50 to 70¢.* — *12-Month Avg. 19.77* ↑↑

20.20	21.57	21.72	20.75	20.05	19.77	19.40	19.11	18.80	18.70	18.52	18.70	↑↑

MILK BASIS (MAILBOX minus CLASS 3 $/CWT) **2018-23 AVG FOR NORTHEAST & MIDEAST STATES OF PA, NY, NEW ENGL.,OH vs.** *NAT'L AVERAGE* **-** *YOUR INDIVIDUAL BASIS WILL VARY*

Mailbox	18.64	18.27	18.52	18.15	18.68	18.38	18.65	18.35	18.62	18.41	19.27	18.75	20.20	19.76	20.58	20.17	20.25	19.64	19.22	18.75	18.82	18.25	18.96	18.48
Class III	17.31	17.31	17.33	17.33	18.16	18.16	18.16	18.16	17.59	17.59	17.60	17.60	18.72	18.72	19.07	19.07	17.30	17.30	16.81	16.81	16.03	16.03	16.98	16.98
BASIS	1.33	0.96	1.19	0.82	0.52	0.22	0.49	0.19	1.03	0.82	1.67	1.15	1.48	1.04	1.51	1.10	2.95	2.34	2.41	1.94	2.79	2.22	1.98	1.50

CORN FUTURES ($/BU)

MAY-26	JUL-26	SEP-26	DEC-26	MAR-27	MAY-27	JUL-27	SEP-27	DEC-27	MAR-28	MAY-28	JUL-28	SEP-28	TREND
4.512	4.610	4.640	4.786	4.912	4.990	5.020	4.830	4.874	4.972	5.020	5.040	4.760	↑↑

SOYMEAL FUTURES ($/TON)

MAY-26	JUL-26	AUG-26	SEP-26	OCT-26	DEC-26	JAN-27	MAR-27	MAY-27	JUL-27	AUG-27	SEP-27	OCT-27	TREND
333.4	330.0	324.3	319.8	316.8	320.1	320.9	320.2	320.2	322.4	321.0	318.5	315.4	↑↑

U.S. AVG PREMIUM ALFALFA & ALFALFA/GRASS HAY 20-22% CP - *Source: USDA Monthly National Dairy Comprehensive Report*

DEC-24	JAN-25	FEB-25	MAR-25	APR-25	MAY-25	JUN-25	JUL-25	AUG-25	SEP-25	OCT-25	NOV-25	DEC-25	JAN-26	FEB-26	*MAR-26
184.82	184.49	189.60	195.30	195.50	187.01	188.00	195.00	202.00	179.00	192.00	202.00	206.60	208.60	215.90	*193.75 ↓↓

DMC OFFICIAL GROSS MARGINS *per cwt(USDA All-Milk, corn, alfalfa & Ill. soybean, feed for ALL CLASSES of dairy cattle on farm)*

DMC	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	DEC-25	JAN-26	*FEB-26	
MARGIN	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	9.42	7.81	*8.46	↑↑
ALL MILK	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	19.00	17.50	* 18.30	↑↑
FEED $	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	9.58	9.69	* 9.84	↑↑

DAIRY COMMODITIES - GLOBAL BIWEEKLY Internet Auction ($/LB) 04/07/26
Weighted Avg. 1 to 6 mo. FORWARD CONTRACTS per metric ton converted to $/LB
NEXT GDT AUCTION 04/21/26

ALL-PRODUCT INDEX	1.9183 ↓↓	3.4%	SKIM POWDER (SMP)	1.5340 ↓↓	1.6%
MILKFAT (AMF)	3.1883 ↓↓	7.1%	BUTTER	2.8044 ↓↓	8.1%
BUTTERMILK POWDER	1.4437 ↑↑	0.7%	CHEDDAR (BULK)	2.1624 ↓↓	3.1%
LACTOSE	0.6597 ↓↓	0.6%	MOZZARELLA (BULK)	1.7899 ↓↓	6.2%
			WHOLE POWDER (WMP	1.6729 ↓↓	0.7%

U.S. CME SPOT DAILY ($/LB) 04/15/26

	Prev. 4 day Lds	Spot price	Weekly Avg
NFDM	18	2.1650 ↑↑	2.1448 ↑↑
BUTTER	69	1.7900 ↑↑	1.7750 ↑↑
CHEDDAR-40	11	1.5775 ↑↑	1.5783 ↓↓
CHEDDAR-500	0	1.5750 ↓↓	1.5750 ↓↓
DRY WHEY	1	0.7100 ↑↑	0.7100 ↑↑

U.S. WEEKLY USDA NDPSR ($/LB) WK ENDING 04/11/26*

FMMO PROD	MIL. LBS	WTED AVG $
NFDM	21.5	1.7231 ↑↑
BUTTER	5.5	1.7899 ↓↓
CHEESE-40	6.9	1.6480 ↑↑
CHEESE-500	REPORT ENDED	
DRY WHEY	6.9	0.6445 ↓↓

***U.S. Weekly NDPSR is averaged for the Month & used in FMMO formulas.*

ANNOUNCED FEDERAL ORDER PRICES ($/CWT) NASS ALL-MILK ($/CWT)

CL I ADV ↑↑	CL I SKIM ↑↑	CL II ↑↑	CL III ↑↑	CL IV ↑↑	ALL-MILK-U.S	ALL-MILK-PA
18.66 (APR)	12.00 (APR)	17.35 (MAR)	16.16 (MAR)	18.94 (MAR)	18.30 (FEB) ↑↑	18.60 (FEB) ↑↑
APRIL CL I Skim ESL Adj. (-0.25) ↓↓		**NEW RULE; ADV BF $2.02 ↑↑*			4.48F	4.49F
MONTH AGO						
15.47	9.99	15.34	14.94	16.29	17.50 4.48F	17.50 4.44F
YEAR AGO						
19.57	10.75	20.12	18.62	18.21	23.60 4.43F	24.30 4.36F

CURRENT FEDERAL ORDER VALUES ($/LB) * = *NEW*
*WEIGHTED AVG. 4-WK MAR. 1-28, 2026

PRODUCT	VALUE	*(New Make Allow vs Old)		NET VALUE	*MAR. 2026 COMPONENTS	
CHEESE	1.5607 ↑↑	*(0.2519)	0.2003	1.3088 ↑↑	PROT	2.0905 ↑↑
BUTTER	1.8969 NC	*(0.2272)	0.1715	1.6697 NC	B.FAT	2.0220 ↑↑
NFDM	1.5741 ↑↑	*(0.2393)	0.1678	1.3038 ↑↑	N.FAT	1.3348 ↑↑
DRYWHEY	0.6724 ↓↓	*(0.2668)	0.1991	0.4056 ↓↓	OS	0.4178 ↓↓

U.S. AVG. BRED COWS & HEIFERS (3rd trimester) *per head as reported by USDA Monthly National Dairy Comprehensive Report*

FEB-25	MAR-25	APR-25	MAY-25	JUN-25	JUL-25	AUG-25	SEP-25	OCT-25	NOV-25	DEC-25	JAN-26	FEB-26	*MAR-26
2921(ltd)	N/A	N/A	2650	N/A	N/A	N/A	2600	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2750	N/A

U.S. AVG. FRESH/MILKING COWS *per head as reported by USDA Monthly National Dairy Comprehensive Report*

N/A	N/A	N/A	3021	N/A	3010	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2700	N/A

CATTLE - DAIRY PURPOSES ($/HD) USDA and other auction reports combined 4-week rolling average as of MAR. 26, 2026

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)
*$2860 Q4-25 ↓↓	$3110 Q3-25	3300	All Dairy 3500	2800	3000	1700	1700	2200	N/A	2600	2000
YEAR AGO											
$2660 Q4-24	$2600 Q3-24	3000	3500	2650	2500	1000	1300	1875	N/A	2000	1800

Price averages do not include lower-end 'common'

PA Auction Markets Apr. 9-14, 2026
CULL MARKET COWS ($/CWT LIVEWEIGHT)

Premium White	Breakers	Boners	Lean
N/A	188.60 ↑↑	172.75 ↑↑	156.00 ↑↑
WEEK AGO			
N/A	176.50	165.50	151.85
YEAR AGO			
N/A	139.85	134.00	120.25

Average to high dressing

FED STEERS ($/CWT LIVEWEIGHT)

	Holstein	Beef-X-Dairy	WK AGO		YR AGO	
Choice & Prime 1250-1550 lb	N/A	228.60 ↓↓	205.25	234.75	N/A	196.85
BULL CALVES: No. 1 & 2, 90-130 lbs	1550.00 ↑↑	2000.00 ↑↑	1500.00	1850.00	860.00	1085.00
($/cwt liveweight) 70- 85 lbs	1675.00 ↑↑	2300.00 ↑↑	1500.00	2200.00	860.00	13200.00

NEW USDA $/CWT* DEC-25

	ALL-MILK	BF*	*MAILBOX
*FL	$24.00	3.98	$23.39
*SE	$24.40	4.09	$22.63
*APP	$24.10	4.36	$21.49
*PAwestern PA only			$20.08
*OH	$21.10	4.44	$19.85
*IL	$19.10	4.50	$19.40
*WI	$18.40	4.51	$19.26
*N.ENG	$19.60	4.59	$19.08
*MO	N/A	N/A	$19.05
*NY	$19.30	4.56	$18.81
*IN	$20.90	4.38	$18.81
*PAeast	$18.90	4.50	$18.60
*MN	$18.90	4.76	$18.43
*MI	$19.20	4.50	$18.01
*U.S.	$19.00	4.51	$17.95
*IA	$18.60	4.67	$17.87
*CA	$19.60	4.37	$16.87
*TX	$18.90	4.70	$16.82
*NE/KS	$17.60	4.76	$16.82
*SD	$18.60	4.85	N/A
*ID	$18.20	4.55	N/A
*NM	$17.40	4.45	$16.25
*WA/OR	$19.10	4.63	$15.71

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