



The Center Spotlight

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THINK SPRING: RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT NO COST TO DAIRY PRODUCERS - FARM SAFETY SIGNS, BIOSECURITY KITS & MORE

Editor’s Note: This is part of a bi-monthly series of timely articles and information from the Center for Dairy Excellence, a non-profit organization focused on strengthening Pennsylvania’s dairy industry.

HARRISBURG, PA — May is a busy time on most dairy farms, with spring planting being a top priority along with so many other day-to-day responsibilities. Your physical health, including farm safety, can often be an afterthought when you’re so consumed with checking off everyday tasks and solving constant challenges that seem to arise. Your mental well-being and ability to manage stress can be even further down on your to-do list. Your operational health and biosecurity efforts are important as well. It’s a lot to think about and manage. This spring, take advantage of some of the free resources available through the Center for Dairy Excellence to ease your burden and help you stay safe on all fronts this spring.

> **Physical Health (Farm Safety).** Safety protocols should be a critical part of your dairy business to protect yourself and your employees. Taking a few extra minutes to make sure you have the proper safety precautions in place on your dairy operation, including simple things like safety signs, can save a life. To help you commit to farm safety, the Center has a series of quick farm safety videos, in both English and Spanish, that you can use to help share simple safety reminders with farm employees. We also have sets of six farm safety signs available at no cost. Visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/farm-safety to view the video series and request free farm safety signs.

> **Mental Health (Farm Stress).** Farming is a rewarding career and lifestyle, but it can be filled with uncertainty — especially during busy periods like spring planting. You are not alone in facing these uncertainties, and it is not uncommon for livestock producers to experience anxiety and depression. To help your community cope with farm stress and offer resources to those who might be struggling, posters and rack cards that include a list of farm stress resources are available at no cost while supplies last. Consider requesting a poster to display in your farm office or rack cards to share with employees or community members. Visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/stress-wellness to request this material and view additional farm stress resources.

> **Operational Health (Biosecurity).** Robust biosecurity protocols are critical to preventing and managing HPAI on your dairy farm. The National Dairy FARM Program and SMS Secure Milk Supply have a variety of biosecurity tools, resources, and signage that can help you enhance biosecurity on your farm. We continue to partner with Penn State Extension to offer Everyday Biosecurity Kits with some of these resources to help protect your dairy operation. If you would like us to send you a compilation of these printed biosecurity resources, please request an Everyday Biosecurity Kit at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/biosecurity-kit or call us at 717-346-0849. We’ll mail you the biosecurity resources while supplies last.



DEVELOP AN EMPLOYEE INTO HERD MANAGER ROLE THROUGH DAIRY HERD MANAGER REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

National Apprenticeship Week just happened on April 26 through May 2, 2026. With many PA dairy producers looking for a more skilled workforce in farm-level management, the Center for Dairy Excellence’s Dairy Herd Manager Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program creates opportunities for employees to gain practical knowledge, information, and skills about progressive dairy operations that stretch beyond their past dairy experiences. Two young dairy professionals recently completed the Dairy Herd Manager RA on Pennsylvania dairy farms: Kristina Quinn, Zahncroft Dairy in Berks County, and Rylee Fuller, Laurel Grove Farm in Perry County. Pennsylvania dairy producers who are looking to develop an existing employee or family member into a herd management role are encouraged to apply for the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program.

"I knew the day Rylee walked in the door, she was going to stay. She really wanted to work and learn. Eventually, she [started the apprenticeship] and started taking over things that I did which was big because then I could do other things. We are proud of Rylee. We were so glad to have her. She is like a daughter that we never had," shared Cindy Comp of Laurel Grove Farm who served as an employer farm and hosted an apprentice on her operation.

Applications for the Dairy Herd Manager RA Program are reviewed on an ongoing basis. For more information about the expectations for farms that are accepted into the Dairy Herd Manager RA, contact Michelle Shearer at 570-768-8316 or visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/apprenticeship.

HEAR ABOUT SIX AREAS TO WATCH IN DAIRY MARKETS THIS SPRING

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	February 2025	February 2026	Change from Last Year	Target Range
Milk Cows	464,000 cows	455,000 cows	- 1.9%	
Total Monthly Milk Production	775 mil. lbs.	760 mil. lbs.	- 1.9%	
Wholesale Milk Price	\$24.30 / cwt.	\$18.60 / cwt.	- 23.5%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 100 lbs. milk)	\$8.08 / cwt.	\$8.39 / cwt.	+ 3.8%	
Milk Margin (IOFC @ 100# of Milk)	\$18.23 / cwt.	\$13.95 / cwt.	- 23.5%	
Rolling 12—mo. Herd Production Avg.	23,898 lbs.	23,757 lbs.	- 0.6%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	181,260	171,190	- 5.6%	< 150,000
% Herds less than 200,000 SCC	66.1%	72.0%	+ 9.0%	
Average Days in Milk	178 Days	177 Days	- 0.2%	165 days
Average Age at First Calving	24.9 months	24.9 months	- 0.1%	21-24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	86 Days	87 Days	+ 1.4%	< 80 days
Average Pregnancy Rate	15.7%	15.6%	- 0.4%	> 20 %

HARRISBURG, PA. — What areas should you be watching to manage risk and navigate changing dairy market dynamics during this busy planting season? On **Friday, May 8 from 12-1 p.m.**, the Center for Dairy Excellence will host a free “Protecting Your Profits” webinar titled “Spring Dairy Market Update: 6 Areas to Watch and Ways to Manage Risk.” Hear from Kathleen Noble Wolfley and Bryce Windecker from Ever.Ag who will share areas to watch within the dairy marketplace this spring and risk management insight.

During the webinar, Noble Wolfley and Windecker will share six areas to watch this spring:

- Milk supply expectations (US and global)
- Support in the Class IV market
- Cheese market dynamics
- Critical role of exports
- Hot protein markets
- Macro market influence
- They will also share ways to manage risk in this environment.

To sign up for the free webinar on May 8, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/pyp-webinar. Connection details will automatically be sent via email after you sign up. A recording will be shared after the live webinar is concluded. Valerie Mason-Faith, Risk Education Manager at the Center, will facilitate the webinar. Contact Valerie at vmason@centerfordairyexcellence.org or call (717) 550-8720 with questions about the webinar.

Visit us at centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 717-346-0849.

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