



# The Center Spotlight

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## DAIRY PRODUCERS INVITED TO FREE ON-FARM ANIMAL CARE WORKSHOPS THIS SPRING

*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** — As you and your dairy team work to enhance efficiency and cow comfort, we hope you'll join us at one of five animal care workshops happening on dairy farms across the state this spring. The workshops will be held directly on the farm for hands-on training. Hosted by the Center for Dairy Excellence, PA Beef Council, the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) and Penn State Extension, the first workshop will be held on March 31 in Lancaster County. These workshops are offered at no cost to help you boost your skills in key animal welfare areas to meet National FARM compliance.

These workshops are for dairy farm owners and/or their employees. You will rotate through four hands-on stations that satisfy the FARM requirements for the following training areas:

- **Cull Cow Decisions, Down Cows and Transition Cows**
- **Animal Handling, Stewardship and Meat Quality Issues** - After a physical demonstration, participants can get in the pen and practice animal handling skills.
- **Dystocia** - Practice hands-on skills related to dystocia with a calving model from Penn State.
- **Farm Safety** - Not just another farm safety talk, but a walk-through of the farm and a conversation about safety do's and don't's.

After rotating through the four training areas of the FARM program, you'll get a physical certificate that you can save in your files to show your commitment to FARM standards. The free workshops are ideal for both English and Spanish-speaking employees, and lunch is included.

**Find a date and location near you:** March 31 (Lancaster County), April 2 (Berks County), April 9 (Centre County), April 21 (Franklin County), and April 28 (Somerset County). To sign up for a workshop, visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/animal-care](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/animal-care), scan the QR code above, or call 717-346-0849.



### TRANSITION WORKSHOP FOR DAIRY FARM FAMILIES ON MARCH 24

No matter what situation or stage you're in, it's never too early or too late to start thinking about "passing the torch" and finding someone in line to transition ownership of your dairy business. Dairy farm families are invited to the "Passing the Torch" Transition Planning Workshop happening on **March 24 in Union County, Pa.**, hosted by Penn State Extension and the Center for Dairy Excellence. Visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/events](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/events) to sign up.



### THREE GRANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PA DAIRY PRODUCERS

The Center for Dairy Excellence leverages funds provided through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the PA Dairymen's Association to provide the following grant opportunities to dairy producers. Take advantage of one of these opportunities on your dairy operation this spring:

**1. Dairy Innovation Grants.** Are you looking to invest in an activity monitoring system for your dairy operation to improve herd health and reproduction efficiency? The Center is accepting pre-applications for Dairy Innovation Grants to fund this technology. Pre-applications are due by March 18. Due to the nature of this process, there will not be any funding awarded unless the Center's application is approved with the PA Dept. of Agriculture.

**2. Dairy Decisions Consultants (DDC) Grants.** The DDC program provides dairy farm families with one-on-one professional consulting resources to help make decisions that will shape the future of your farm in one of seven key areas. Farms can receive up to \$4,500 in funds to work with a consultant. First-come, first-served funding.

**3. Team Program Grants.** If you're looking to create a transition plan or plan a major business transformation on your dairy, the Center's On-Farm Team Grant Program can help you establish on-farm teams and take advantage of professional consulting resources to make strategic decisions at the farm level. Farms can receive up to \$3,500 to cover team expenses. First-come, first-served funding.

Visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org) to learn more about each grant and apply online. If you have questions, contact Melissa Anderson at 717-788-0296 or [mmanderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:mmanderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org). She can help you determine which grant best fits your goals for your dairy operation.

## LEARN HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR DAIRY'S BIOLOGICAL & ECONOMIC HEALTH

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	January 2025	January 2026	Change from Last Year	Target Range
Milk Cows	465,000 cows	454,000 cows	- 2.4%	
Total Monthly Milk Production	842 mil. lbs.	817 mil. lbs.	- 3.0%	
Wholesale Milk Price	\$24.70 / cwt.	\$17.50 / cwt.	- 29.1%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 100 lbs. milk)	\$7.99 / cwt.	\$8.35 / cwt.	+ 4.5%	
Milk Margin (IOFC @ 100# of Milk)	\$18.53 / cwt.	\$13.13 / cwt.	- 29.1%	
Rolling 12—mo. Herd Production Avg.	23,796 lbs.	23,818 lbs.	+ 0.1%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	185,910	175,500	- 5.6%	< 150,000
% Herds less than 200,000 SCC	66.5%	70.0%	+ 5.2%	
Average Days in Milk	178 Days	174 Days	- 2.1%	165 days
Average Age at First Calving	24.9 months	24.9 months	- 0.3%	21-24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	86 Days	87 Days	+ 1.2%	< 80 days
Average Pregnancy Rate	15.5%	15.3%	- 2.8%	> 20 %

**HARRISBURG, PA.** — Healthy cows are about biology. Healthy farms are about economics. You need both. In our "Protecting Your Profits" webinar on **March 20** titled "The Missing Metric: How to Calculate Your Dairy's Biological and Economic Health," hear expert insight from Dr. Joe Bender, Assoc. Prof. of Clinical Dairy Production Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania - New Bolton Center.

Biological health refers to the physical health of your cows, including freedom from disease, longevity, and comfort. Economic health centers around the cow's financial viability, productivity & cost efficiency. It's easy to pick out a biologically unhealthy cow — you'll often see physical signs like lameness, sickness or thinness. Economically unhealthy cows are harder to find. To truly evaluate your farm's economic health, you need to know your metrics, including cost of production and profit margins. When you master biological health, you have a herd capable of strong milk production. When you master economic health, you've made decisions to ensure strong financial performance, operational efficiency, strong balance sheets, and good ratios. During the webinar, learn how to balance both sides of the biological and economic health equation; how ratios demonstrate the economic health of your farm; and practical ways to balance strong milk production with strong economic health, so you have the right formula to make a good product and take good care of your cows, employees, and environment.

Visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/events](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/events) to learn more and join the webinar on Friday, March 20 at 12 p.m.

Visit us at [centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://centerfordairyexcellence.org) or call 717-346-0849. Sign up for our email list at [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/newsletter](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/newsletter)