



The Center Spotlight

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SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2026 PA DAIRY SUMMIT: FIND YOUR TRUE NORTH

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 — Purpose is your compass. Passion is your fuel. And when you hone in on your **True North**, you’re better equipped to embrace your purpose and use your passion to propel yourself forward throughout your career in the dairy industry. That’s the theme of the 2026 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit scheduled for February 4-5, 2026 at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg – Hershey in Grantville, Pa. Hosted by the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania and Center for Dairy Excellence, the annual dairy conference will bring together dairy producers and allied-industry representatives who want to grow their skillsets, network with individuals across the dairy industry, and learn tangible skills they can use to stay the course through the highs and lows.

Michael Hoffman will be one of the keynote speakers at the Dairy Summit, leading an energetic session about how “*Owning Your Future Is Not DNA-Driven.*” Hoffman plans to share how success is not genetic. You’ll never find ‘success’ in your DNA. Instead, he will define what success actually means – and how it involves owning your choices, shifting your culture, contributing your best daily, and finding your true north in a business where change is a constant factor. Infused with entertaining stories and delivered in an engaging manner, Hoffman’s presentations richly convey that business will always be about *people*. The Summit also has several exciting, new pieces of programming planned:

- An entire track of discussion groups for peer-to-peer conversations
- Movie night to watch a private screening of the powerful film, A World Without Cows
- Fun-filled evening reception with entertaining, engaging ways to interact
- Breakout sessions on the fundamentals, the people, and the analytics

Save the date: Visit www.padairysummit.org to save the date and view conference information, including sponsorship opportunities that are now available.



ENTER THE FARMER-MADE INGENUITY CONTEST BY DEC. 12

Dairy farmers are the original engineers, finding creative solutions to solving common and not-so-common problems on the farm. Whether it’s choosing the welder over an expensive repair bill or figuring out how to track data on your own to avoid another monthly subscription fee, farmers are constantly looking internally for homemade remedies to create cost-savings, improve their processes, and keep moving forward. Since we know farmers learn the most from other farmers, we want to create a platform to share those ideas so that other farms may benefit from them. That’s why we created this “Farmer-Made Ingenuity” Contest!

Enter your best idea for a chance to win \$1,000 – and benefit from seeing what other farmers have to share. The top three ideas with the most votes will win a cash prize, and everyone will benefit by learning more about those inventive solutions that may be hiding in plain sight on many of our dairy farms. Looking for inspiration? Here are a few examples of creative, farmer-made solutions: Pill gun made out of two pieces of PVC pipe; Excel spreadsheet that calculates Daily Dry Matter Intakes; a homemade calf milk pasteurizer wagon with an electric kettle; and more. Get creative! Submit any homegrown ideas you can think of that have helped you move your farm forward. Visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/farmer-made-contest to enter your idea by December 12.

NOMINATE A DAIRY PROFESSIONAL YOU KNOW FOR INDUSTRY AWARDS

Do you know a Pennsylvania dairy producer or industry professional who excels in leadership, service, or innovation? Nominations are now open for the annual Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Award program. These awards continue to be an exciting way to shine a light on the individuals who are making positive contributions to our industry day in and day out. Hosted by the PA Dairymen’s Association, the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania, and the Center for Dairy Excellence, your nominations are due by November 17. Nominations are being accepted for the following three awards: PA Distinguished Dairy Producer Award, PA Dairy Service Award and the PA Dairy Innovator Award. Visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/awards to submit a nomination and learn more. Email Emily Barge at ebarge@centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 717-346-0849 with questions about the awards.



DAIRY MARKET UPDATE: LOWER MILK PRICES AND DMC PROGRAM

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	August 2024	August 2025	Change from Last Year	Target Range
Milk Cows	465,000 cows	460,000 cows	- 1.1%	
Total Monthly Milk Production	802 mil. lbs.	807 mil. lbs.	+ 0.6%	
Wholesale Milk Price	\$24.10 / cwt.	\$21.30 / cwt.	- 11.6%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 100 lbs. milk)	\$7.47 / cwt.	\$7.68 / cwt.	+ 2.8%	
Milk Margin (IOFC @ 100# of Milk)	\$18.08 / cwt.	\$15.98 / cwt.	- 11.6%	
Rolling 12—mo. Herd Production Avg.	23,698 lbs.	23,771 lbs.	+ 0.3%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	240,150	260,690	+ 8.6%	< 150,000
% Herds less than 200,000 SCC	46.4%	40.3%	- 13.1%	
Average Days in Milk	185 Days	186 Days	+ 0.3%	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	+ 0.7%	< 80 days
Average Pregnancy Rate	17.3%	17.1%	- 1.2%	> 20 %

HARRISBURG, PA. — There’s no doubt that right now we are seeing a transition from higher prices and margins to lower milk prices and tighter margins. The downward pressure on milk prices right now is coming from a growing milk supply. After more than 12 months of decreasing supply, USDA has reported increases in milk production from March through August in 2025. The last production report shows milk production up 3.2 percent in August, with the nation’s dairy herd now at its largest in more than a decade. Milk production per cow is also shifting upward, with the latest report showing a 27-pound increase in per-cow milk production. Any increases in domestic demand or export growth are not significant enough to absorb that much production growth. As a result, prices have fallen dramatically in the past few months.

Looking ahead, Class III milk price futures on the CME are now sitting at \$16.60 per hundredweight for the next six months. That is down about \$2 – \$3 from where they were earlier this year. Class IV prices have fallen even more dramatically. Currently, Class IV milk futures are sitting at \$14.40 for the next six months, which is a low not seen since January 2024. Lower commodity feed prices and higher cull cattle prices could provide a cushion against the lower milk prices. However, the lower feed prices will also prevent the DMC Program from kicking in. Changes on either side of the equation can happen quick, as we have seen with milk prices in recent weeks. Although DMC did not offer an indemnity payment in 2025, it is still a cheap source of insurance against dramatically low margins. Consider signing up in 2026 to help protect your risk.

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

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