



It's Not Just One Thing, But Many, That Add to a Dairy's Success

By John Frey, Executive Director,
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Editor's Note: This is a special feature from the Center for Dairy Excellence exclusively for the Farmshine newspaper.

Think about the people you consider successful — whether they're business owners, professional athletes, or even just well-respected community leaders. What do you think has attributed the most to their success?

While success has many definitions, it isn't the result of one thing. Chances are, if you ask people you believe to be successful, they'll tell you any success they've had was the result of several things

coming together with positive results. In any business and every endeavor, being successful takes a lot skill, a little luck, and a tremendous ability to pay close attention to all the little things that add up to those "big" wins defining success.

Dairy farming is no different. With 2011 bringing higher milk prices, now is the time to re-evaluate all of the little things you do everyday on your dairy and make sure you're using the very best management practices to benefit your operation.

Ask yourself, "what do I do really well and where can I improve?" Then develop a plan to implement changes that can have a lasting and positive impact on your bottom line. It may be as simple as enhancing your vaccination program or something

more comprehensive like making facility changes to improve cow comfort.

Success is not a destination, but an ever moving target for continual improvement. It is up to each one of us to determine how we're going to achieve our goals.

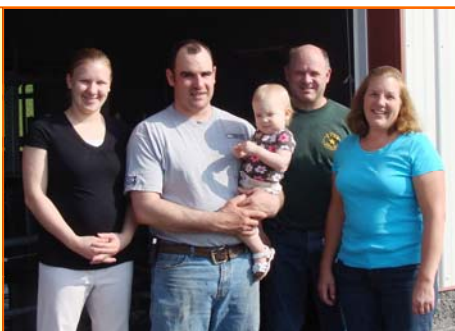
For this month's Farmshine center page, we asked two dairy farm families to describe one area they focus on to enhance their bottom line. They both told us the same thing: it's not just one area, but many, that contribute to success and profitability on their dairy operation.

For more information about the Center for Dairy Excellence, call 717-346-0849 or e-mail us at info@centerfordairyexcellence.org.

JAY AND FAYE GOOD BEN AND KARLA MULLEN

Goodview Farm, Canton
Bradford County

Jay and Faye Good and their daughter and son-in-law, Karla and Ben Mullen, are partners at Goodview Farm, a 580-cow dairy operation with 1,000 acres of cropland. Goodview Farm has a 27,000-pound rolling herd average with 986 pounds of fat and 820 pounds of protein. They average under 150,000 on somatic cell count, and have very few incidents of milk fever or ketosis.



What is one area where you have focused to improve performance of your herd? "For us, it's not just one thing, it's 100 little things," said Jay. "We are fortunate to have newer facilities, and you have to do the best job you can to take good care of your cows with what you have available.

"The areas I focus a lot of my attention on are special needs and breeding. We try to manage and group our cows to hold herd health and keep them on a steady path of production. We tend to feed more energy than some people might, but we target it to the cows that need it most.

How do you focus on that particular area? "First of all, we try to get our fresh cows up and running faster," he said. "We give them 10 cc of Vitamin B and 5 cc of Oxytocin as soon as they're fresh. We take as much colostrum out of them as possible for the calf, and we balance it with a calcium oral drench.

"Our goal is to get them eating as quickly as possible. We feed Rumensin to our dry, pre-fresh and post-fresh group, and we put probiotics in the pre-fresh and post-fresh feed. We check temperatures every day in the post-fresh period, and we drench with propylene glycol for three days after freshening.

"Basically, we feed a one-group ration for all other groups, but we add energy and Rumensin to the cows in the first group. We take away energy from the cows in Group 4," Jay said. "Once they're milking well, they move out of the special needs pen and into Group 1. We watch milk weights and check any cow with a 10 percent drop in milk production, which helps us catch mastitis a lot quicker. My goal is to keep them out of the special needs pen once they leave after freshening.

"Cows in Group 1 receive a half pound extra of Megalac for energy, and we try not to overcrowd them," he said. "Once they're bred one time and looking good, we move the heifers to Group 2 and mature cows to Group 3. In a few rare cases, cows that are over-conditioned will move to Group 4, which has everything milking below 80 pounds and more than 200 days in milk. Occasionally, if a cow is too fat but still milking 100 pounds, we'll move her into that group because it has more to do with body condition than production."

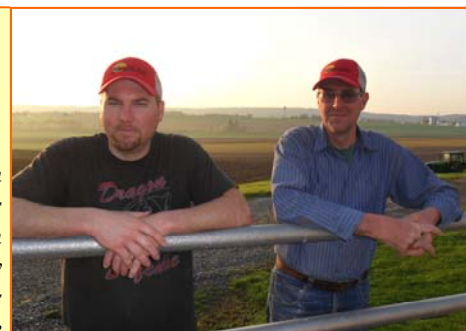
How has it benefited your operation? "By managing the energy levels in the feed the way we do, we can put the energy where it is needed the most," Jay said. "Since the low group needs it the least, we can take some of the corn and energy away, so the feed is a little cheaper. That group also cleans up refusals from the other groups.

"Incidents of herd health on the farm are very low, with about zero incidents of milk fever. In the end, I believe there are 100 things that can make a difference, and it really takes a team effort with everyone doing their part."

DENNIS AND KEITH BRUMBAUGH

Curryview Farms, Martinsburg
Blair County

Father and son Dennis and Keith Brumbaugh, with their wives Teresa and Melissa, own Curryview Farms, a 125-cow Holstein dairy herd with 200 acres of cropland. The Brumbaughs have a 25,203-pound rolling herd average, with 3.6 percent fat and 3.1 percent protein. Their farm boasts a 85,000 somatic cell count average for all of 2010, earning them the Land O'Lakes Milk Quality Award.



What is one area where you have focused to improve performance of your dairy herd? "It's really three or four things that work together for us," Dennis said. "Cow comfort, mastitis control, good forage and consistency are all critical areas where we focus.

"Cows don't like a lot of changes, whether it is in what they eat, what time they get milked or where they sleep. We really work hard to keep the cows content and comfortable."

How do you focus on those areas? "In 2005, we put in dual chamber water beds, and we went from four to 16 fans in our freestall barn," Dennis said. "Each fan row has a thermostat that turns on the fans automatically when the temperature gets too high, and the feed bunk down the middle has misters to keep the cows cooler in the summertime. Before that, we were stuck around 21,000 to 22,000 pounds, and ever since we improved cow comfort, our herd average has been slowly increasing."

"We watch mastitis closely. One full-time hired person and I do all of the milking, and we treat cows as soon as we see a flare up instead of letting her go. We use Spectramast LC as our first choice, with Today and Pirsue as other options," Keith explained. "Dry cows get either Tomorrow or Spectramast DC for high SCC cows. They also get vaccinated with Endo-Vac Bovi for mastitis at dry off, two weeks later, and 30 days after freshening."

Keith adds that "giving cows an 8cc dose of MU-SE two weeks before freshening helps boost their immunity system to fight off new infections. We also scrap freestall alleys and clean out stalls twice a day and put hydrated lime on the back third of the stalls once a day."

Forage quality is a priority for the Brumbaughs. "When it is time to mow hay, we have the discbine ready to go, and we make sure it gets cut and harvested at the right maturity and moisture levels," Dennis said. "For corn silage, we try to pick highly digestible varieties that the cows will milk well on.

"We don't change our ration very often, because we know cows don't like changes. Consistency is key," he said. "We feed a one-group ration balanced for 80 pounds of milk. We have a far-off dry cow group and a pre-fresh dry cow group, so we can watch that group closer and make sure they're eating okay as they approach their freshening date."

How has it benefited your operation? "The increase in milk production over the past years from 21,000 to 25,000 has helped us generate increased profits, and that helps your bottom line," Dennis said.

"We also figured out we received more than \$13,000 more just in quality premiums in 2010," he said. "That really helps a lot."