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## **DAIRY PROS WORKSHOPS TEACH DECISION MAKING, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

*Dairy Professionals Gain Tools to Use with Dairy Farm Customers*

HARRISBURG – Dairy sales and service professionals learned new skills to help their farm clients become better decision-makers to improve on-farm profitability at the Dairy PROS workshops, hosted by the Center for Dairy Excellence and Penn State Dairy Alliance. More than 120 dairy professionals attended the April meetings.

“Dairy PROS is a new initiative that builds on the foundation of the former Dairy Advocacy and Resource Team, or DART, program, with an increased focus on addressing the challenges and opportunities all dairy producers will face in 2010,” said John Frey, executive director of the Center for Dairy Excellence.

Dr. Wayne Weiland, Midwest regional manager of Standard Dairy Consulting, identified several skills that lead to management success in his program "Decision Making for Maximum Profitability." The skills include:

- Leadership or the ability to set a clear direction and show consistency.
- An orientation to change, and a willingness to explore new and different options.
- A process to drive consistency for cows and people.
- A realization that people matter. "The best managers know how to pick complementary business partners and suppliers," Weiland said. "They are also willing to show employees they care and are willing to help them succeed."
- A willingness to ask for help when needed.
- Good financial management skills, with an understanding of market and margin risks.
- An understanding of business management, with an aptitude for decision making and risk taking.



"The best dairy managers know how to align themselves with a helpful network to support their business," Weiland said. "The concept of the Center for Dairy Excellence's on-farm dairy resource team program is an excellent example of how a network of help could benefit the farm."

Weiland shared insight on how dairy professionals can be an even greater resource for their dairy farm customers. "While the farm manager has to own the decisions they make, you can be a resource in helping them walk through the other steps in the decision making process, which involves evaluating the situation, diagnosing the problem, brainstorming solutions, evaluating options and monitoring the results."

Virginia Ishler and Tim Beck from Penn State Dairy Alliance reviewed available tools to help dairy farm families manage the business and make decisions on their farm. Beck and Ishler showed participants how to use the income-over-feed-costs and cash flow planning spreadsheets available at [www.dairyalliance.org](http://www.dairyalliance.org).

"The Risk Management Team at Penn State Dairy Alliance is working one-on-one with more than 50 dairy herds across Pennsylvania on income-over-feed-costs and cash flow planning," said Ishler, nutrient management specialist, Penn State Dairy Alliance. "We extend the offer to anyone interested in getting started on income-over-feed-costs monitoring or participating in a cash flow planning workshop to contact the Dairy Alliance at 888-373-7232 for more information."

"Tools like the cash flow planning resources can really be invaluable in helping dairy producers get a handle on their financial and business management skills," Weiland told participants.

The workshops also included networking opportunities for participants within their professions. "Dairy PROS was a great investment of my time," said Roger Sherwood of Wyoming County who attended the Dairy PROS meeting. "I used the information on the decision model and income-over-feed-cost concepts with two dairy producers later that day. I will share this information with the rest of our sales team in the future."



Dairy PROS, an initiative of the Center for Dairy Excellence and the Penn State Dairy Alliance, is funded in part by a grant from the Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Investment Board. For more information about Dairy PROS, call the Center for Dairy Excellence at 717-346-0849 or Dairy Alliance at 1-888-373-7232.

Penn State Dairy Alliance is an initiative of Penn State Cooperative Extension. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and diversity in its workforce.

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*The Center for Dairy Excellence is an initiative of the Department of Agriculture and was launched in January 2004 by Governor Edward G. Rendell. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center's mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more about the Center at [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org).*