



## Dairy Open Houses Focus on Planning for the Future

By John Frey, Executive Director,  
Center for Dairy Excellence

**Editor's Note:** This is a special feature from the Center for Dairy Excellence exclusively for Farmshine newspaper.

Each summer the Center for Dairy Excellence looks forward to our annual series of "Open House and Dairy Tours." These events, hosted on dairy farms across the state, are a great opportunity for neighboring dairy farm families, local agribusiness members and others in the dairy industry to get together, tour a local dairy farm

and learn about resources available to help their businesses flourish.

This year's open houses will be held in Juniata, Venango and York Counties in late July and early August, and will showcase three dairy farm families that are investing in growing and modernizing their operations to make room for future generations.

Pennsylvania's dairy industry is at an exciting crossroads. The average age of the primary dairy farm owner in this state is more than 55 years old. Yet, with dairy manufacturing in the Northeast growing and new products emerging,

the region is looking for a strong, growing milk supply for the future. With this growing demand, we need more dairy farm families to begin planning for future opportunities to bring the next generation or a younger partner into the business.

Join us for one or more of the "Open House and Dairy Tours" and learn how these three families have planned for the future. During the tour, you'll also learn about their best management practices for the dairy and for the environment. Each open house is held from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., with a picnic style lunch included. We hope we'll see you there.

**THE EVENTS ARE FREE, BUT PRE-REGISTRATION FOR THE "OPEN HOUSE & DAIRY TOUR" SERIES IS REQUESTED. CALL 717-346-0849 OR E-MAIL INFO@CENTERFORDAIRYEXCELLENCE.ORG TO REGISTER.**

### THURS., JULY 21 ▼ KURTZ VALLEY ▼ 396 DAIRY LANE ▼ MIFFLINTOWN, JUNIATA CO.

JULY 21:  
JUNIATA  
COUNTY

Myron and Mary Gehman own Kurtz Valley Holsteins, a 300-cow dairy with 360 acres. Their son-in-law Jordan, married to Chrissy, is herd manager, and their son Linford does custom harvesting. The Gehman's younger children Lynette, Wesley, Wynita and nephew Henry all help with various chores on the farm.

**What You'll See:** The Gehmans recently moved their herd into a 280-cow, six-row free stall barn with a gravity flow manure system. They have a swing-20 parlor and a new bulk tank. Heifers are raised at a brother's farm nearby.

**What You'll Learn:** Myron and Mary grew up on dairy farms and started milking in a small tie-stall facility in 1988. In 1995, they began renting the current facility and bought into the herd of 100 cows. In 1997, the barn burned and they built a 100-cow tie stall barn.

The Gehmans purchased the farm in 2006, and, in 2008, they started planning for the next generation. In 2009, they broke ground on the free stall facility and parlor.

A management team established in 2006 through the Center for Dairy Excellence has helped Kurtz Valley with planning transitions. It has been "a great tool," according to the Gehmans, who have begun working on a 10-year succession plan.

### AUGUST 11: YORK COUNTY

THURS., AUGUST 11 ▼ WALK-LE  
HOLSTEINS ▼ 6898 OAK LANE  
▼ THOMASVILLE, YORK CO.



Leroy and Brenda Walker, with their son and daughter-in-law Brad and Charlene, are owners of Walk-Le Holsteins, a 270-cow dairy with 400 acres of cropland. Along with Brad, the Walkers have two other children, Greg and Michelle, and seven grandchildren.

**What You'll See:** The Walkers recently built a six-row freestall barn built for future expansion and expanded their herd to 270 cows. The freestall barn was built with plans for a new parlor at some point and includes a flush system. A new calf barn was also recently built.

**What You'll Learn:** The Walkers rented a farm in New Freedom, York County, prior to purchasing the current operation in 1994, where they milked 105 cows until 2000 when they expanded to 165 cows with a bedded pack for show, older and post-fresh cows.

The Walkers milk three times a day in a double-five parlor and rely on their profit team to help make better decisions for the dairy. As Leroy says, "I don't see how anyone could survive without a profit team anymore."

Conservation and water-flow management were included in the plans of their recent expansion, and those who attend the open house will learn about the best management practices they have incorporated into the dairy.

### THURS., JULY 28 ▼ ROLLING SPRING FARM ▼ 133 WILSEY RD ▼ FRANKLIN, VENANGO CO.

JULY 28:  
VENANGO  
COUNTY

Charlie and Denise Bean, with their two sons Matt and Steve, own and operate Rolling Spring Farm, a 80-cow dairy with 700 acres of cropland. In addition to the dairy, the Beans have a grain bin facility to store commodities to sell.

**What You'll See:** The Beans recently built a 105-cow, two row, drive-through free stall facility with curtains and tunnel ventilation and retrofitted a two-row flat parlor. The tour will also include a look at the heifer and calf facilities.

**What You'll Learn:** In 1981, Charlie bought his uncle's share of the family partnership and went

into business with his father, milking 60 cows. In 1991, they purchased a neighbor's farm and took on additional cash cropping. In 1991, they purchased a neighbor's farm and took on additional cash cropping. After the grain bins were built in 2001, the family continued to dairy and crop farm, with the herd growing slightly each year.

With a new free stall facility built in 2010, the family is hoping to grow herd numbers to 90 head internally by the end of 2011. Both Matt and Steve are interested in continuing the operation, and the family is working on plans for the future.

This open house will be held in conjunction with the Venango County Holstein Picnic. For details on that event, contact Charlie Bean at 814-374-4539 or pharndb@hotmail.com

