



# The Center Spotlight

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## York Co. Dairy Family Values Input of Profit Team

**Editor's Note:** This is part of a 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 — The Walker family in Thomasville, York Co., has worked with profit teams occasionally before, but for the past three years, they've gotten serious about it.

"We meet every three or four months to stay updated and see what's going on," Leroy Walker said, who owns Walk-Le Holsteins with his wife Brenda. "The profit team has really helped, especially since we are a family operation. It helped bring that outside perspective in and close the communications gap."

Their son Brad is the herdsman for the dairy, and wife Charlene also helps. The Walker's other son Greg works as a welder and helped with a recent expansion the family made to 270 cows, and their daughter Michelle works off the farm.

The Walkers will host the final Center for Dairy Excellence "Open House and Dairy Tour" this year. Dairy farm families and agribusiness members can tour the farm, while learning more about resources like the profit team that can help them create stronger dairy businesses.

### A Sounding Board for the Family

"The first thing we always do in our profit team meetings is go over the basics," Walker said. "We look at the daily milk production and a breakdown of the monthly milk production and our quality premiums. We always cover nutrition if there is anything that needs to be discussed, and we have our nutritionist, veterinarian and local banker there."

The Walkers receive a grant from the Center for Dairy Excellence that covers the cost of the person who facilitates the meetings. "Even without that grant, we would still get our monies' worth out of it."

Reproduction is a key area where the profit team has helped. "We had some reproduction issues over the years, and the profit suggested having some people look over our records to offer suggestions.

"Dr. Bob Munson from the University of Pennsylvania started working closely with Brad, and we went to a total shot program. We now blood test every 30 to 32 days, and we are able to get the results back each Friday, the day when we set up our cows to get them on a re-synch program.

"We also had some PI count issues, and we talked about that with the profit team," Walker said. "We ended up with a new commercial hot water heater and a pre-heater for the milk tank. Since we got those, we haven't had any issues."

### Help with Planning the Expansion

The Walkers recently built a six-row freestall barn designed for possible for future expansion, including a new parlor at some point. The facility includes a manure flush system and a sand separator/recycling lane. A drop ceiling with insulation provides better heat abatement and ventilation for the herd.

"When we starting thinking about the expansion, we brought it up to the profit team initially as needing new heifer facilities. The more we thought about it, the more we decided we were set for a new dairy facility," Walker said.

"The profit team suggested we have Dan McFarland from Penn State Cooperative Extension in to give us some suggested specs on the new facility. Then we had the builders give their bids based on those specs, so everyone bid on the exact same package and we were comparing apples to apples.

"When you have a profit team, you catch things that maybe you wouldn't see without it," he said. "You get in the same rut from day to day, and the



The Walker family will host the last center "Open House and Dairy Tour" on their farm on Thursday, August 11.

profit team brings that outside perspective into the mix. We've done walk throughs with the team from time to time, and it's helped keep everyone in the loop and upbeat."

### Tour the Dairy and Learn More

Anyone interested in touring Walk-Le Holsteins and learning more about their profit team can do so at the "Open House and Dairy Tour" next Thursday, Aug. 11. The event will be held from 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., with a tour of the farm and short program including comments from the family. A picnic-style lunch provided at no cost is also included in the day.

Although the event is free to participants, pre-registration is requested. To register, call the center at 717-346-0849 or e-mail [info@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:info@centerfordairyexcellence.org).

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## Milk Prices Up, But Outpaced by Increase in Feed Costs

Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Performance Scorecard Summary	June 2010 Report	June 2011 Report	Change from last year	Target range
Milk Cows	541,000 cows	543,000 cows	+0.37%	
Rolling 12-Mo. State Milk Production	10.601 bill. lbs.	10.701 bill. lbs.	+0.94%	10.8 bill. lbs.
Wholesale Milk Price	\$17.50/cwt.	\$22.80/cwt.	+26.63%	
PA Daily Feed Costs (cost of corn, soybean & hay at 65 lbs. milk)	\$6.74/cwt.	\$8.08/cwt.	+53.31%	
Milk Margin (IOFC @ 100# of Milk)	\$11.76/cwt.	\$14.00/cwt.	+19.05%	
Milk Production/Cow/Day	63.60 lbs.	62.90 lbs.	-2.37%	80 lbs.
% of Herds with 80+ lbs./cow/day	14%	12%	-12.68%	
Rolling 12-mo. Herd Production Average	20,856 lbs.	21,137 lbs.	+1.34%	25,000 lbs.
Average Somatic Cell Count	281,330	269,020	-4.36%	200,000
% of Herds below 200,000 SCC	35%	38%	+10.34%	
Average Days In Milk	187 Days	189 Days	+1.07%	185 Days
Average Age to First Calving	25.5 months	25.4 months	-0.20%	21—24 mo.
Average Days to First Service	90 Days	88 Days	-2.61%	< 80 Days
Average Cull Rate (% left herd)	34.7%	35.8%	+3.26%	20—35%
Average Pregnancy Rate	18.02%	18.97%	+5.27%	> 20%
To view complete scorecard, visit:	<a href="http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org">www.centerfordairyexcellence.org</a>			

HARRISBURG — Milk prices are more than \$22 per hundredweight. However, the increase in milk price is overshadowed by higher feed costs, now more than 50 percent higher than a year ago.

Milk margins are up 19 percent from a year ago. Milk production per day is off 2.37 percent from a year ago, with the number of herds with more than 80 pounds down to 12 percent. The rolling 12-month milk production average was up 1.34 percent to 21, 137 pounds.

Somatic cell counts improved 4.36 percent from a year ago. However, they were up 9 percent from May's levels of 246,000. The number of herds with somatic cell counts below 200,000 dropped from May to June, with 14 percent fewer herds qualifying for the 200,000 premium level.

Days in milk increased in June, and pregnancy rates improved. Cull rates were up slightly, while average age to first calving dropped to 25.4 months.

### Help to Reach Your Benchmarks

If your farm is looking for help in reaching your benchmarks, the "On-Farm Dairy Resource Team" and "Dairy Decisions Consultant" program may be helpful. To learn more, call the center at 717-346-0849.

To view the complete scorecard, go to [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org). Click on the "Scorecard" icon at the middle of the page. For more information about resources available from the Center for Dairy Excellence, call 717-346-0849.



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