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JULY DART MEETINGS FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DAIRY SALES & SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES, FARMERS

HARRISBURG – To learn how to better serve their clients’ needs, nearly 100 dairy sales and service representatives met with producers throughout Pennsylvania as part of the July Dairy Advocacy and Resource Team, or DART, meetings.

The meetings, hosted by the Pennsylvania Dairy Task Force and Center for Dairy Excellence, focused on the state of the dairy industry and on-farm sales etiquette.

“This round of DART meetings offered a tremendous opportunity for individuals who support dairy farms each day to come together in a roundtable format to discuss the state of the industry and share what they are doing to help individual dairy farm families,” said John Frey, executive director of the Center for Dairy Excellence.

Four farms hosted meetings and tours, including the Kulp Family Dairy LLC in Martinsburg, Blair County; Nissley’s Riverview Farm in Mount Joy, Lancaster County; Charles Ulmer Farm in Cogan Station, Lycoming County; and John Ligo Farm in Grove City, Mercer County.

Phil Kulp, Mike Nissley, Ulmer, Ligo and neighboring producers shared their perspectives on the “do’s and don’ts” of making farm calls, encouraging representatives to schedule appointments for visits and provide data and customer contact information to support their products and services.



Mike Evanish, of MSC Business Services, a division of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, presented data on the 2008 financial performance of Pennsylvania dairy farms. “Although milk prices and input costs changed from 2007 to 2008, fundamental areas of management had the most significant impact on farm profitability,” said Evanish. “Herds with higher internal growth typically had stronger financials than those with lower or negative growth levels.”

Alan Zepp, dairy center risk management coordinator, reviewed risk management options, including the new LGM for Dairy program available to producers. “As milk prices continue to become more volatile, knowing and understanding risk management options will become a necessity for all dairy farmers,” he said. “LGM for Dairy is one of those options that, even with today’s prices, could provide positive margins for producers later this year and early in 2010.”

Presentations from the DART meetings, along with recommendations from the producers who spoke, are posted online at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org. Go to “Industry Representatives” and click on “See DART Meeting Summary” for more information.

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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.

PHOTO 1: DART participants toured Riverview Farm, Mount Joy, Lancaster County, one of four meetings held in July.