



For Immediate Release

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DAIRY CONFERENCE CALLS OFFER INSIGHT ON FORAGE MANAGEMENT, LOWERING PRODUCTION COSTS

Audio, Presentation Materials Available Online

Harrisburg – Two recent “Mastering the Dairy Business” conference calls offered insight on forage management and lowering production costs. As part of a learning series offered by the Center for Dairy Excellence to help dairy farmers manage a business in an ever-changing industry, both calls were recorded and are now available to download online at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.

“With harvest season now in full swing across most of Pennsylvania, these calls really helped producers think through the key things they need to be doing now and throughout the coming year to enhance forage quality and maximize feed efficiency,” said John Frey, executive director of the Center for Dairy Excellence.

Penn State Cooperative Extension agronomist Paul Craig presented “Saving More of the Forage You Make,” showing results he and Penn State’s Dr. Ken Griswold gathered from forage analysis studies on bunkers, ag bags and upright silos.

“Minimizing oxygen exposure and getting a dense pack during harvesting are the keys in getting good quality forages,” Craig said. “It is the same for bunkers, ag bags and silos – you have to pack it properly.”

Craig explained how forage moisture levels and packing density can affect forage quality and introduce spoilage. He also showed techniques for packing and feed-out to ensure forage quality is maintained throughout the feeding cycle.

Rick Grant, president of the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute in New York, discussed lowering production costs through feed efficiency and cow comfort during the second call.

“There is an easy way to make 30,000 pounds of milk and a hard way,” he said. “The easy way is with comfortable cows fed high quality forage.”

Grant shared a “forage quality + cow comfort = profitability” formula that can help lower a farm’s cost of production. “If you have high quality, highly digestible forages, you can ensure more feed nutrients are being used by the cow and not going into the manure,” he said.

“If the ration isn’t formulated properly or there are problems in the palatability or consistency of the feed, it can reduce the cow’s response to the high quality forage,”



he added. "Poor feed efficiency leads to poor rumen health, and ultimately reduced cow comfort."

Grant emphasized the need to group cows properly so the use of high quality forage can be targeted to the highest producing cows. "Grouping the cows allows you to feed those high producers without over-conditioning late lactation cows," he said.

A third "Mastering the Dairy Business" conference call on delivering optimal animal care is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 7, from noon to 1:30 p.m., with Dr. Gordon Jones, managing partner at Central Sands Dairy in Nekoosa, Wis.

Jones purchased cattle from 19 states to assemble the herd at Central Sands, and promotes the "ABCs" of animal care — air, bunk (or nutrition) and comfort. With more than 25 years of veterinary experience, he emphasizes standard operating procedures as critical at Central Sands, with optimal health a priority to get optimal production. The farm's success is in the results, with only five displaced abomasums last year from among 4,150 calvings.

Held during the noon lunch hour, the calls are intended to provide cutting edge information without requiring participants to leave their homes.

The conference call is free, but pre-registration is required. Participation is on a first-come, first-served basis. To register, call the center at 717-346-0849 and provide your name, phone number and e-mail address. Once registered, the participant will receive the call-in number and code.

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Photos: Paul Craig, Rick Grant, Dr. Gordon Jones

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.