

# PDPW MANAGERS memo

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May 8, 2009

Keep reading to see these highlights and more:

- Find out what to consider when feeding newborn heifer calves
- Get answers to some tough questions about your Hispanic workers
- Check out tips to keep your important documents safe

Thanks,  
PDPW

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## Featured PDPW Member:

It's the words "professional dairy producers" that initially drew Linda and Jerry White to investigate and join PDPW. "We aren't just farmers; we're business people. And we wanted to learn all we could from a dairy organization focused on dairying as a business," Linda White states.

Linda and Jerry White, along with sons Nathan, 28, and Ryan, 22, own and operate Kinnamon Ridge Dairy near Reedsburg, Wis. Since purchasing a 48-cow stanchion herd in 1979 from Jerry's dad, Kinnamon Ridge Dairy has expanded to 580 cows, and new facilities enable them to be more efficient. The couple formed an LLC last year, with legal work continuing as the sons are brought into their family farm operation.

"PDPW provides a place where people—big dairies or small dairies—are comfortable and can learn," Linda states.

"The members of PDPW understand that there is no ideal farm size and that there are many right ways to dairy. We have taken advantage of the wide range of workshops offered by PDPW and the information we've gained has definitely helped us raise the bar at farm."

Calling PDPW's workshops "extremely valuable," Linda says family farm members have attended just about all of PDPW's financial and marketing workshops or classes. She adds that farm members also enjoy the farm tours as "they expose us to progressive farms" and provide Kinnamon Ridge Dairy with technology and techniques to think about and/or implement at home. "Farmers in this organization do not see other farmers as competitors. We see each other as comrades in the battle for profitability. Our farms are bluntly honest about both what works and what doesn't and we've found that even small changes made based on tour information easily recover the investment. I can't think of a more enjoyable way of learning than getting together with other farmers and celebrating what's working right and," she chuckles, "commiserating over what's gone wrong. PDPW's attention to details makes every tour like a mini vacation,"

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## For Your Dairy Business:

**MORE THAN 22% OF ALL DEATHS IN DAIRY HEIFER CALVES COULD BE AVOIDED** by preventing failure of passive transfer. That's the findings of Dr. Sandra Godden, University of Minnesota. When designing a colostrum management program, Dr. Godden urges producers to zero in on 10 areas: timing of colostrum feeding, volume of colostrum fed, quality of colostrum, method of feeding, calf stress, colostrum cleanliness, storing colostrum, colostrum substitutes or supplements, colostrum from Johnes positive cows and measuring the success of a colostrum management program. In regards to storing colostrum, Dr. Godden says colostrum may be stored at room temperature for one to two days, refrigerated for up to seven days and frozen in one- or two-quart baggies for up to one year. She warns, however, that "thawing using high heat will destroy antibodies." She adds that colostrum should be thawed using warm—not excessively hot—water baths or by using a microwave at low or medium power and removing the thawed colostrum frequently before it overheats. Heating at high power for 1 minute will begin to destroy antibodies. To read Dr. Godden's "Calf Health Management" document online, with pages 9-12 and page 16 addressing a colostrum management program visit [http://www.cvm.umn.edu/dairy/prod/groups/cvm/@pub/@cvm/documents/asset/cvm\\_85245.pdf](http://www.cvm.umn.edu/dairy/prod/groups/cvm/@pub/@cvm/documents/asset/cvm_85245.pdf). You can also visit [http://ag.arizona.edu/ans/swnmc/papers/2009/05\\_Godden\\_2009S\\_WNMC.pdf](http://ag.arizona.edu/ans/swnmc/papers/2009/05_Godden_2009S_WNMC.pdf) to read her "Microbial Hazards Associated with Feeding Colostrum" paper in full.

**AVOID THE DANGERS OF BECOMING PENNYWISE, POUND FOOLISH.** That's the advice of Chuck Schwartau, University of Minnesota Extension dairy specialist. "Be wary about cutting costs just for the sake of cutting costs. Some of your costs of production may be good investments that more than pay for themselves," Schwartau says. The dairy specialist offers these suggestions that can help dairy operations when milk prices are low: 1) **Test forages regularly.** Work with your nutritionist, and keep rations well balanced, but simple and very productive. Balance rations as needed to maximize the use of farm-raised feeds while getting the optimal value out of purchased supplements. 2) **Look for signs of feed wastage.** For bunker operations, be sure to keep the area of the silage pile that is being fed very clean. Clean up the face of the silage pile to minimize spoilage. Don't drive over feed. 3) **Consider purchasing moderately priced semen.** Getting enough semen in the cows at the right time to be sure the cows settle is more important than buying expensive semen and attempting to split doses. 4) **Heat detection is tricky work that requires dedication either by the dairy producer or an AI tech.** If a producer is short on time, consider whether the cost of contracting an A.I. tech to do heat detection could bring more cows into the milking string sooner. 5) **Know your costs per cow per day.** "If she is costing more to feed than the value of the milk she is producing, decide whether she should be sold, or maybe moved to a lower production group or in with the dry cows where it costs less to keep her," he said. "Work smartly and you could earn yourself a few more dollars at the end of the month." Chuck Schwartau's column, "Making money the old-fashioned way - Earn it!" is located at AgBuzz.com.

**EVER CAUGHT OFF GUARD WITH QUESTIONS** about your Hispanic employees? If so, how do you respond to your neighbors, friends, or relatives when they put you on the spot regarding your Spanish-speaking employees? Advice from Tom Wall with Language Links LLC: Be prepared to reply confidently about your workforce. For example, when you hear a remark such as "Mexicans are taking all of our jobs because they're willing to work for cheap," an appropriate response would be "Hey, we can only hire the people who apply. And as far as working for cheap, our average milkers make around \$30,000 a year plus benefits (or whatever variation fits your scenario)." Or should someone ask "How many of your Mexican workers are legal?" be ready with a remark such as "Our documentation shows that they all are. We fill out paperwork for every employee we hire, the same week they're hired. And if they don't bring us their paperwork, they no longer have a job."

**STOP SIGNS CAN IMPACT HAULING COSTS.** Kevin Erb, University of Wisconsin Extension Environmental Resources Center, urges producers to include two key items—distance and time—in their calculations when it comes to figuring the cost of hauling manure. “If a commercial applicator is hired, most haulers charge by the hour and the farmer provides the fuel,” Erb states. Thus, the number of stop signs a hauler encounters can influence hauling charges. Erb explains that, if the road speed is 55 mph with a truck, each stop sign can add four minutes to the round hauling time. Three stop signs or 90-degree turns can reduce efficiency by as much as one trip per hour.

**YES, YOU CAN VACCINATE TO HELP PROTECT** against Johne’s disease. And, with Johne’s disease estimated to cost the Wisconsin dairy industry an estimated \$54 million annually in reduced milk and decreased weight, Dr. Elisabeth Patton, Wisconsin’s Disease Program Manager, urges producers to consider whether a Johne’s vaccination program is right for their herd. Research underway on three Wisconsin demonstration herds is showing that Johne’s vaccine—which can be given to calves up to 35 days old—reduces the number of animals shedding the Johne’s bacteria and reduces the number of animals that develop clinical disease. Dr. Patton says, eventually, this will reduce—but may not eliminate—the amount of organism looming on the farm. To determine if a Johne’s vaccination program is right for you, Dr. Patton has comprised a list of six questions for producers to answer: 1) Have I tested my herd using fecal culture or PCR and found at least one animal or environmental sample positive? 2) Does my herd have a moderate to heavy rate of Johne’s disease? 3) Will my calves be exposed to manure from adult cows? 4) Have I seen clinical cases of Johne’s disease in home-reared animals? 5) Have I seen clinical cases of Johne’s disease in 1st and 2nd lactation home-raised animals? 6) Do clinical cases of Johne’s disease account for 10% or more of my culls? “If you answered ‘yes’ to more than one of these questions, the vaccine may be a useful part of your Johne’s disease control program,” Dr. Patton states. “Contact your herd veterinarian for more information.” She adds that a Johne’s disease vaccine can be a valuable tool in kickstarting a Johne’s disease control program, especially in herds with a heavy Johne’s infection rate. As with any vaccine, Johne’s disease vaccine works best when it is combined with a good control program that focuses on reducing exposure of young stock to adult cow manure. Herds requesting to use vaccine must meet certain requirements before a Johne’s vaccination program can be implemented, these requirements can be explained to you by your veterinarian.

**BECAUSE FEED CHANGES CAN HAVE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES** on milk production or milk components, Dr. Michael Hutjens, University of Illinois extension dairy specialist, has compiled three “Golden Rules” and 12 “Feed Decisions to Consider.” Golden Rule #1: “Never give up milk yield as income will drop faster than expenses. One pound of ration dry matter can cost 9¢ to 11¢. One pound of dry matter above maintenance can support two pounds more milk. Reducing one pound of dry matter saves 10¢ while losing 36¢ to 40¢ of milk income potential.” Golden Rule #2: “Maintain milk components; milk protein is worth \$3.40 a pound and milk fat is valued at \$1.80 a pound. Low milk components can reflect incorrect feeding program changes, impaired rumen function and lost milk income potential.” Golden Rule #3: “Guard against feed changes that can impact the dairy herd long term (such as reduce fertility and herd health). While lost milk yield and/or components may respond in several weeks after getting the ration corrected, getting cows pregnant, getting lame cows to walk or reducing somatic cell count can take months to an entire lactation to improve or lead to culling.” Go to [http://www.livestocktrail.uiuc.edu/uploads/dairy/papers/Feeding\\_Challenges\\_Hutjens.pdf](http://www.livestocktrail.uiuc.edu/uploads/dairy/papers/Feeding_Challenges_Hutjens.pdf) to read Dr. Hutjens’ complete article which includes his 12 “Feed Decisions to Consider.”

**RESPECTED NUTRITIONIST OR CONSUMER ACTIVIST NUTRITIONIST?** In a presentation at a national conference, Lisa Katic, formerly with the U.S. Dairy Council and now president of KConsulting, Washington, D.C., noted that some nutritionists have a hidden agenda, and many of today’s consumers are taking information provided by these nutritionists as proven research. Katic’s presentation highlighted eight individuals who are receiving media attention for their information regarding nutrition and nutrition policy and shared snippets of what these individuals are saying about food, food industry and agriculture. She also explained where each individual fits in the nutrition scene—and if they are among today’s consumer activists or an unbiased nutritionist. Go to <http://www.trufflemedia.com/home/content/2009-the-changing-face-of-agriculture> to hear Katic’s 20-minute presentation in full and view her slideshow presentation.

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## For Your Business Mind:

**FINANCIAL STRESS OFTEN LEADS TO** emotional stress, and too much stress—particularly the kind that doesn't seem to let up—can have a significant impact on health. Seven signs that stress may be impacting your health include 1) more headaches than usual; 2) more colds; 3) sleep problems; 4) general anxiety; 5) digestive upsets; 6) lower libido; and 7) chest pain or rapid heart beat. Researchers point out that symptoms should not be taken lightly. Dr. Michael Rossmann, AgriWellness Inc., points out that, during times of stress and anxiety, “we devalue ourselves, lose confidence and our hope dissipates” and “we tend to focus on the negatives.” While market prices and input costs are out of our control, Dr. Rossmann says we can insulate ourselves from stress through careful management of our behavior. He suggests seeking out positive social opportunities—including more time with family rather than working extra long hours and wearing ourselves out even more. To stimulate the production of beneficial hormones and decrease the production of adrenaline and cortisol which can lead to anxiety and depression, Dr. Rossmann says it's okay to “retreat into fantasy and acceptable forms of pleasures” as an effective self-management tool. Those activities include reading particularly enjoyable literature, listening to our favorite music and engaging in positive day dreaming. “What it comes down to is not working harder but behaving smarter,” he summarizes. “Retreats into social, behavioral and psychological circumstances that allow us for even brief moments to change our body chemistry all help us immensely—and our openness to positive alternative ideas, to the possibility of accepting help and to viable solutions increases.”

**ARE YOUR VALUABLE, HARD-TO-REPLACE DOCUMENTS SAFE?** Because a natural disaster can strike just about any time, you can be prepared by having your financial records organized and hard-to-replace documents properly stored. Financial experts recommend storing documents in three separate locations: a safe-deposit box at a bank or credit union, a fireproof safe at home and with an attorney, relative or trusted friend. A safe-deposit box at a bank or credit union is the recommended place to store automobile titles, birth and death certificates, personal property inventory, property deeds, marriage documents, stock/bond certificates and legal documents. Because banks and credit unions can legally seal your box upon notification of your death, you might want to visit with your bank or credit union and family to ensure everyone understands how to access the box upon your death or incapacitation. A fireproof safe or box at home is a good place for storing cancelled checks—yes, some people have them, recent tax records, insurance policies, a living will, power of attorney, your original will, trust documents, warranties and list of what you have stored in your safe-deposit box. Either original documents or copies can be stored with an attorney, relative or trusted friend. Two additional smart moves: 1) Have duplicates of every document and store the duplicates in your fireproof box or safe-deposit box; and 2) Make a list of what you have stored and where it is stored and indicate whether it is the original or a duplicate.

**YOUR WAY OF BEING AND HOW YOU MANAGE** can work either for you or against you, particularly during challenging times. Dr. Allen Young of Utah State University says, “If you are discouraged, think about how this might be impacting the people who work for you.” Dr. Young stresses that managers should take action in four key areas: 1) deal with your attitudes toward bad times, employees and the future; 2) develop a plan for working through the bad times; 3) adjust labor practices; and 4) communicate with all employees. He underscores the importance of honoring previous commitments and being fair about workloads. “It is common to reassign the work done by someone who has just left the farm to someone who is still employed at the farm as a means of saving money. However, overloading already overworked individuals will cause serious problems if you aren't careful about equally distributing the load and having frank discussion about whether or not it can be done.” Two other pieces of advice for Dr. Young include not nitpicking the performance of stressed and tired employees and provide new goals and new challenges for employees that will help the business get through the bad times. “My personal feeling is that smart businesspeople use bad times, if possible, to position themselves so that, when the good times come, they will be able to take full advantage of them.”

**BOOK: CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS: TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN THE STAKES ARE HIGH.** Written by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler and based on their popular DialogueSmart training seminars, this book addresses how to tackle those pivotal conversations between two or more people when opinions vary, emotions are running strong and the stakes are high. And we all know that these conversations can occur in our lives—business, family and socially—on a daily basis. The authors' seven-point strategy explains how to get people to lower their defenses, create mutual respect and understanding, increase emotional safety and encourage freedom of expression. One reviewer summarized the book in this manner: "This wise and witty guide gives you the tools you need to step up to life's most difficult and important conversations, say what's on your mind, and achieve positive outcomes that will amaze you." Listeners can also gain from reading the book as they will learn four factors that characterize crucial conversations and get a six-minute mastery technique that prepares them to work through any high-impact situation with confidence.

**TWO HUNDRED NINETY-THREE DIFFERENT WAYS.** That's the number of ways you can break a dollar. In addition to breaking a dollar into 100 pennies, you can break it into 10 dimes; four quarters; two quarters and five dimes; one quarter, three dimes, one nickel and 40 pennies; and the list goes on and on until you reach 293 ways. If you want to start writing down the various ways to break five dollars, be prepared to have more than 100,000 combinations. Ten dollars will take even more time as there are more than 3 million combinations.

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