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## **‘Best four hours I spent all week;’ Issue Forum attracts more than 100**

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Special for Farmshine**

COCHRANVILLE, Pa.—As one person put it: “This was the best four hours I spent all week.” He wasn’t alone.

For Josh Barrick, one of more than 100 people attending the PDMP Issue Forum on Farm Safety last Thursday, Nov. 6 in Cochrانville, Pa., the take home message was: “Always pay attention to what you’re doing on the farm, because if you don’t, that’s when things happen.”

Josh and his father Vic and uncle Dave milk 430 cows at their dairy near Carlisle, Pa. The young dairyman has attended about ten PDMP meetings, including the past two years of Dairy Summit, and his family’s farm has been a member of PDMP for four years.

“This was a really good meeting today,” said Josh during a break. “Safety is always an issue, and the program here really highlighted the things we should always be thinking about. I have two young children at home (Keegan, 3, and Emma, 1). After hearing the speakers today, I’m planning on doing the farm walk-through safety audit the speakers talked about.”

Both Dr. Charlie Gardner, tech services veterinarian with Cargill Animal Nutrition, and Kay Moyer, farm safety educator with the Penn State Cooperative Extension and Lancaster Chapter of Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, provided attendees with work sheets for doing their own safety self-audit to uncover the details that can be overlooked in the day-to-day operation of the dairy farm.

Gardner shared examples from his own on-farm experiences and described Cargill’s highly regarded safety program, along with plenty of ideas for how dairies can set up and improve their own safety programs on the farm.

The biggest thing, he said, is to “adopt a culture of safety.”

“Fatigue, complacency, frustration, rushing. These are the four states of mind that lead to most accidents on farms,” said Gardner. He also explained the four critical errors: 1) Mind is not on the task; 2) Eyes are not on the task; 3) In the line of fire, and 4) Loss of balance, traction or grip.

He gave attendees several examples of actual and potential accident situations and had them pick out the frame of mind and critical error.

“This year we lost 29 of our farmers,” said Moyer, “and 3,000 were disabled.”

That’s the bad news: Farm accident fatalities rose this year. The good news is that the number of youth involved in fatal farm accidents has not increased, but it hasn’t decreased much either.

Moyer has spent most of her life teaching children about safety on the farm, and she shared some pretty sobering statistics.

“Tractors are our single most common cause of death, accounting for 49% of fatalities in the U.S. last year,” said Moyer. “We saw 83% of those fatalities during the harvest season.”

From grain wagons and PTOs, to manure pits and silo ladders, Moyer highlighted many important safety tips for protecting the most vulnerable population on the farm: children. She challenged attendees to go home and “take a walk on the farm to evaluate safety and hold safety meetings on a weekly basis. Even a small farm can do this at the kitchen table for 15 minutes each week.”

Above all, she said, “take time to make children aware of the hazards on the farm. What makes the farm unique is that you not only work, but also live, in this environment.”

Moyer addressed safety among those serving the dairy farm, giving the example of a Cargill truck driver who demonstrated the importance of *routinely* doing his 360 walk-around, before driving out the farm lane. In this particular case, the driver, after talking to the farmer for awhile, asked where his 15-month old son was. The farmer said he had gone back to the house with the other children. Still, the driver did his 360 walk-around, and there he found the little boy between the wheels of his truck.

“If that driver had not practiced his 360 walk around as a safety routine before driving away, they would have lost that little boy,” said Moyer, illustrating the importance of having safety protocols and using them routinely.

Bringing the insurance and financial perspective on farm safety was Dave Yeager of Westfield Insurance, representing Bernard C. Morrissey Insurance, Inc.

Yeager urged producers to take advantage of the many resources available to them from their insurance agents.

“Best management practices are important,” he said. “When we do an insurance audit, it’s very apparent the pride of ownership that contributes to the kind of upkeep on the farm that makes it a safer place. It makes not only a financial difference, but also a human difference.”

Chester County dairy producer Duane Hershey talked about his experiences having a full-fledged safety audit by Westfield and Morrissey Insurance as well as having Dr. Gardner, Kay Moyer and others do a walk-around audit of his family’s Ar-Joy Farm, Cochranville.

“The Cargill people saw some good things,” he said. “But they also noticed some things for us to address.”

Hershey and others on the panel of speakers said after an audit, it’s critical to prioritize the things you can do now, three months from now and six months from now, by setting a time to have safety improvements completed. Otherwise, they get pushed to the bottom of the pile in the every day pace of chores on the dairy farm.

Attendees especially appreciated hearing from Adams County dairy producer Robby Sebright, who talked about a farm accident involving his 8-year-old son, G.W.

Sebright gripped the audience with his detailed description of the events of that day in January 2008, when he backed the feed mixer over his son, who had just moments before been on the porch playing with his brother, out of harm's way.

"We are very fortunate that G.W. is with us today and 100% recuperated," said Sebright. "When I was a kid, I would see the farm safety displays with the little toy people and think they were pretty cool looking displays. But I never thought those things could happen to me. Don't let yourself think it can't happen to you."

For a list of farm safety resources and other information from the Issue Forum on Farm Safety, contact PDMP at 1-877-326-5993.

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