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Wisconsin dairy innovator will inspire Pennsylvania Summit-goers to capture value from emerging opportunities

By SHERRY BUNTING
Special for Farmshine

LANCASTER, Pa.—If you ask third generation dairyman Boyd Weary why he attends the Pennsylvania Dairy Summit each year and has been a member of PDMP for three, he'll tell you it's because he appreciates the motivation and encouragement "to do better and try new things."

Boyd and his sons Brandon and Brian milk 160 cows at their dairy farm in Newville, Cumberland County, Pa.

"I look forward to the speakers," says Weary. "They always have a good line up."

He adds that the topics about passing on the family farm as well as hearing from dairy farmers in other parts of the country are a highlight each year.

The 2009 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit at the Lancaster Host Conference Center Feb. 11 and 12 will again feature the popular showcase farms, with several different dairymen from New York and Wisconsin at the podium giving virtual tours on screen and sharing their insights and experiences.

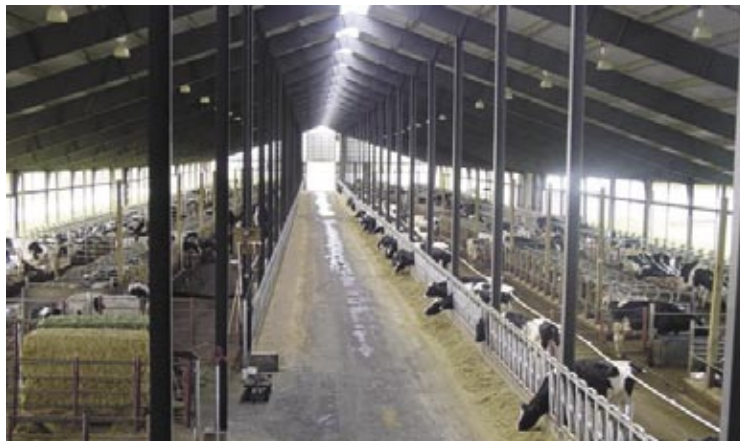
The 2009 Summit also includes a breakout session about passing on the farm, with New York dairyman George Mueller. (Mueller and his general and breakout sessions were highlighted on PDMP's page in the December 12 edition of *Farmshine*).

Among the showcase farms at Summit this year will be Wisconsin dairyman and innovator John Vrieze.

They get a lot of snow up there in northwest Wisconsin where Vrieze's Emerald and Baldwin Dairies are located just outside of the small town of Emerald. In fact, weather prevented Vrieze from making his appearance at the Dairy Summit last year. This year, he's back on the program and will be talking Wednesday, Feb. 11 about "Capturing Value and Creating Innovation."

Pennsylvania producers are looking forward to hearing from this well known dairy innovator, who has also been a leader and spokesman for the industry.

Vrieze Farms, Inc. was built in 1907 by John's grandfather Henry. In 1952 it was taken over by his father Wes. Today, under John's leadership, the farm has reached its 100-year mark as a 2007 Century Farm Award winner.



The Transition Management Facility (left) houses 450 dry and fresh cows and springing heifers from the Baldwin and Emerald Dairies, and is co-owned by John Vrieze. In 2007 a new calf farm (right) was created to house all the heifers from birth to 400 pounds. Calf-A-Now houses 500 replacement heifers for the two milking facilities. Vrieze is an innovator, especially when it comes to producing more than milk on the dairy farm. He is involved in efforts to help make the U.S. more energy independent. From the horse-drawn calf carts to sophisticated technologies for anaerobic digestion, renewable natural gas production and manure separation, Vrieze is energy and environmentally conscious. His work with a biogas company is aimed at producing renewable pipeline natural gas from methane digesters. Photos from Vrieze Farms' website www.vriezefarms.com

According to the farm's website, www.vriezefarms.com, their Baldwin Dairy, Inc. started operations in 1997 and is currently milking 1,050 cows. Vrieze is also the co-owner at Emerald Dairy, LLC which was built in 1999 and is milking 1,200 cows.

He also co-owns the Transition Management Facility, which houses 450 dry and fresh cows and springing heifers from the home dairies. Since 2001, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine students, along with their professors, have been able to train in this facility where they have access to 2,700 cattle and the history of the herds.

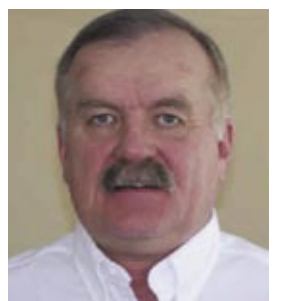
A new calf farm, Calf-A-Now, was created in 2007 to house all heifers from birth to 400 pounds. The farm raises 500 replacement heifers for Baldwin and Emerald Dairies.

For nearly 20 years, Vrieze has been involved in ag development in Russia. And in his home state of Wisconsin, he is founder and president of the Dairy Business Association, formed in 2000 to develop strategic plans to allow the growth of dairies in Wisconsin.

He has also been actively working with a company that is developing a system to convert biogas produced from manure at Emerald Dairy into natural gas for the pipeline in nearby



Third generation dairyman John Vrieze is founder and president of the Wisconsin Dairy Business Association. He received the 2001 Innovative Dairy Farmer of the Year Award from the International Dairy Foods Association.



Baldwin, Wisconsin.

Vrieze, a member of the Wisconsin Governor's Climate Change Task Force, is constantly working to keep the dairy industry productive, "green and growing." Whether it's horse-drawn calf carts or state-of-the-art manure separation and biogas production, Vrieze is a progressive-minded dairyman who believes dairy farms are the future for both food and fuel.

In fact, his new project, "Future Farm: Food and Fuel," focuses on the evolution of anaerobic digesters and manure processing systems opening up a whole new world of opportunity for today's farmer.

His involvement in innovative technologies for producing more than milk on the dairy farm are sure to inject enthusiasm for the future amid the doldrums of low milk prices.

PDMP member shares highlights of Dairy Managers Academy

By SHERRY BUNTING
Special for Farmshine

ORLANDO, Fla.—PDMP member Justin Risser, herd manager at his family's Meadow Vista Farms, Bainbridge, Pa., was a first-time attendee at last week's Dairy Managers Academy in Orlando, Florida, where he gleaned important information for developing

stronger skills to improve the dairy.

"The speakers were phenomenal," said Risser in a telephone interview with *Farmshine*. "The dairy tours were also terrific."

The Academy, presented annually by the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, specializes in providing MBA-level business training in a hands-on, interactive learning environment. The 2009 program agenda covered everything from market trends and thriving during uncertain times to consumer attitudes and profitable negotiations.

Risser highlighted the profitable negotiations segment as being very useful and hands on. Academy organizers note that a session of this caliber is typically only available to top employees at Fortune 1000 companies.

Executive trainer Jason Mitchell of Bay Group International designed the training to help business professionals reach better agreements with customers, colleagues and partners.

"The skill of negotiating is under-stressed in the dairy industry, and with the skills to do it right, it could really benefit the business," said Risser about the training. "We talked about how it would relate to the industry in terms of feed prices, getting land for rent, selling an old asset (tractor or implement) to a neighbor. It is definitely relevant."

Risser learned that "standing by your price shows the value you see in your item. If you waiver and come down real easy, you de-value your possession very quickly."

He also learned about other negotiating skills such as "anchoring" and "framing" the price negotiation.

"Framing your situation is a skill that sets up an agreement and really hammers home the key points of the agreement... drawing out the positives of the deal," said Risser.

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