

Topic of the Month

Goal Setting

The current pandemic demonstrates that the world can learn a lot from agriculture and that agriculture can learn a lot from the world.

Nations have certainly struggled in the face of an outbreak to juggle morbidity and mortality with costs, economic concerns, and restrictions. That is certainly something we deal with frequently on a smaller scale in our herds.

On the other hand, we appear to be on the tail end of this pandemic-or are we? Nobody really seems to be sure. We need to take a lesson.

This is a time to set goals. With poor prices and poor markets and widespread uncertainty, we need to think about the future of our operations. It won't even cost anything. Given that there are many unknowns, the lesson to learn from our current situation is to establish goals that are attainable, measurable, and that everyone is willing to work toward. As the government debates how and when to reopen businesses and stop strangling the economy, a problem becomes evident- We have been continuously reacting to situations and have no idea what our endpoints are.

This could also be a good time for a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to refocus both employees and management and expose areas for improvement. Maybe the goal is to increase reproductive efficiency or improve milk quality or manage a labor issue or develop an exit strategy. Whatever it is, make sure there is a way to measure it, a timeline, and accountability. Because as they say, if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of April 30, 2020

Corn	\$3.11/bu
Soybean Meal	\$11.37/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$289.60/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$90.00/cwt

Practice News

- We have discontinued use of the answering service for after-hours calls. Calls to the office phone outside of normal business hours will be forwarded to the phone of the veterinarian on call.
- Agriculture has been deemed as essential with regards to stay-at-home orders currently in place. We have been asked to help spread the word that agricultural businesses related to food production are exempt from mandatory closures, however, they are expected to comply with recommended practices such as maintaining personal space and limiting non-essential interactions. Livestock veterinary services are also permitted to continue with the request that we try to conserve supplies such as gloves.
- The Center for Dairy Excellence is constantly updating information and resources available to dairy producers during this pandemic. The CDE can also be contacted at 717-346-0849 or you can visit online at centerfordairyexcellence.org/covid-19-farm-resources/.

In the News

- Beef and milk markets have both plummeted recently but for different reasons. A recent article in *Dairy Herd Management* highlighted the differences. Both sectors have produced an abundance of product available for harvest. Beef has stalled because of a shortfall of labor and processing plant closures, while milk has stalled because of a decreased demand. However, milk is unlikely to ever face the processing issue confronting beef because of the degree of automation in milk processing.
- President Trump has issued an executive order calling on meat processing plants to remain open, citing them as critical infrastructure. Plants are receiving additional protective equipment as well as CDC and OSHA guidance going forward.