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KDDC's 2025 Fall Tour from the Consultant's View

Jared Patterson

On September 30th KDDC staff and dairy producers gathered in Elizabethtown to embark on a trip up north to Wisconsin, to attend the 2025 World Dairy Expo. The group also did farm tours and had a total of 25 attendees. Five farm stops in total, four in Indiana and one in Illinois.

Traders Point Creamery was our first stop on our way to Madison. Traders Point Creamery is a family owned, handcrafted creamery, and farmstead restaurant. This is a 100% organic operation and is organically certified. Since 2003, the farm has raised their herd of Brown Swiss and Jerseys, on a 100% grass-fed diet. Their production methods are purposefully low-tech and traditional. While they do pasteurize their milk, they do not homogenize it. Traders Point argues that this preserves the natural structure of the fat molecules, making the milk easier to digest. They also make and sell their own raw, non-pasteurized cheese, with which

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Kentucky Milk Matters produced by Carey Brown

President's Corner

Freeman Brundige

Just days before the first day of fall, and it looks like the "Summer of 25" may be starting to give up its grip on us. It was 87 here yesterday, but only 63 today and a welcome change. The long hot and dry days of the last three months have taken a toll on our crops now and in the future. Heat stress on our cows and the people taking care of them has been hard to deal with.

Fall in a busy time for KDDC. The Fall Tour is already on the books, but still have the North American International Livestock Expo, board meeting plannings and nominations for next years board to work on to keep our organization going.

Kentucky was well represented in the show ring in Madison. Congratulations to all the exhibitors for their successes that they had. Just having animals good enough to compete at World Dairy Expo is a special accomplishment. Your attendance at our meetings and seminars is always needed. As always thoughts are welcomed and needed.

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Executive Director Comments

Tori Embry

I've been lucky enough this year to have several conversations exploring new collaborations with different organizations across the state. The potential here is exciting- collaborations bring more to the Kentucky dairy farmer, magnify the impact of KDDC, and help the future of the organization. I eagerly look forward to seeing how these conversations continue to grow into actionable steps with visible outcomes.

In the meantime, some of our long-term collaborations continue to produce great results. For example, our 2025 Fall Tour was an outstanding demonstration of our partnership with the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. This Fall Tour to the World Dairy Expo has been held annually for the past 15 years with the support of KADF. Producers who attend this tour talk about the impact it has had on planning improvements for their own operation, connecting with sales and support folks throughout the industry, and the chance to take a "vacation" while still enjoying everything dairy has to offer. This partnership with KADF has resulted in many improvements to Kentucky dairy operations and highlights the importance of this collaboration that spans much more than just the Fall Tour.

Our partnership with the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative is a newer partnership for KDDC, which began in 2020 with the University of Tennessee and North Carolina State University. Many producers in Kentucky are familiar with this project because of the farm business grants that have awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars to Kentucky farms, but it is much more than that. It has brought education, workforce development, and business development for Kentucky dairy producers and processors that have changed the future for many of these small businesses. We are proud of the role we have in this project and look forward to continuing to provide these opportunities.

We're lucky to have so many great organizations to partner with in the dairy industry. The check-off-funded organizations like Southland Dairy Farmers, The Dairy Alliance, and the ADA of Kentucky are doing such great work to promote dairy and we work hand-in-hand with them on several projects to support the industry. The Dairy Products Association of Kentucky is also working for the Kentucky dairy industry, notably supporting events like the Kentucky Milk Quality Conference and the Cheese Auction that bring value directly to producers. It takes each one of us working towards our mission to drive progress for this industry.

As we look forward to 2026, we will continue to explore new partnerships, opportunities, and goals while keeping our eyes on the overall mission of KDDC: to educate, promote and represent dairy producers and foster an environment for growth of the Kentucky dairy industry. We hope you will join us in this work. Producers: we need to hear from you to give direction to our activities. With recent redistricting on the Board of Directors, you may find an opportunity to be a leader within our organization by serving on the board. Industry members: your support is fundamental in keeping our organization moving forward and advocating for the industry. Find more information on 2026 annual sponsorships below. There is a spot within KDDC for all dairy supporters and I encourage you to reach out if you'd like to join us in 2026.

From all of us at KDDC, we hope you have a wonderful holiday season and a very Merry Christmas!

As 2025 comes to a close, we begin our preparations for 2026. KDDC expects 2026 to be a busy year, with continuation of our regular programming and more- more opportunities for producers, more connections with the industry, and more activity around the issues that matter to the Kentucky dairy industry. Join us in being a part of more by becoming a KDDC allied industry member in 2026.

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2025 Kentucky Milk Quality Conference

Michelle Sidwell

The Kentucky Milk Quality Conference focuses on Milk Quality from the Farm all the way through Processing. When it first originated, it was intended for processors, field representatives, and marketing agencies. With the influx of all the value-added processors, more content has been added each year. The event brings together local and regional professionals covering hot topics in the dairy industry. In addition, training and creative solutions for both small and large dairy processors are also provided.

This year's Kentucky Milk Quality Conference was held in Bowling Green, Kentucky on September 24 -25th. Hosted by the Kentucky Milk Safety Branch and supported by many other dairy groups, we had the opportunity to listen to many talented speakers who all offered valuable information.

Former Kentucky Milk Safety Branch Manager Brian McAnelly started the conference by welcoming everyone and highlighting the KMQC sponsors. Dr. Jeff Bewley from Holstein USA then took the floor and spoke about many of the technological advances and cow monitoring systems the Dairy Industry now has to offer. It is truly amazing to see how far these systems have come and all that has been developed to assist producers in maximizing their full production potential and improving overall herd health.

Brian McAnelly then gave an update on the status of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Kentucky and what has been done as far as the Milk Safety Branch's sampling and testing program. In March 2025 MSB had set a plan in place to test each individual Dairy farm and that was done for three consecutive months and all tested negative. A plan was then implemented to begin silo testing in dairy processing plants by inspectors to be done four out of the next six months. After this round of testing, State and USDA will determine the next course of action to be taken as far as testing. While HPAI has been detected in other mammals and poultry flocks within the state, as well as Dairy cattle in other states, Kentucky's Dairy herds have remained free of the virus. We hope it stays that way!

Benefit Auction

Erica Turley from Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc. then gave a very thorough overview of Milk Testing. She mentioned in detail how each test was performed and the testing specifications that processors must adhere to maintain excellent milk quality. Some of the specific tests for

KMQC "A Day in the Life" Panel

screening raw milk mentioned were testing for antibiotics, added water, Direct Microscope Count (DMC) to check for bacteria, Standard Plate Count (SPC), Preliminary Incubation (PI) count, and Somatic Cell Count (SCC).

Fabian Bernal from DMI then spoke about Milk Sustainability. He gave a presentation that covered a lot of statistical facts about methane production of Dairy Cattle and how certain technologies have been in the works to convert this methane to a usable source of fuel. It is so exciting to see how the Dairy Industry has been an integral part of using this research to help utilize waste as a resource that can be of benefit to many!

We had the opportunity to venture into "A Day in the Life" of many of the Dairy's Industry experts thanks to a gracious panel of individuals who offered their perspective of what it was like to be in their work boots each day. It was really neat getting to hear what their individual day-to-day activities included. Panel experts included:

- Pulaski County Dairy Producer, Patrick Patterson
- Owen Transport
- Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc. Field Representative, Larry Roy
- Environmental Lab Manager, Beth Johnson
- Prairie Farms Dairy Quality Assurance Manager Somerset, Ray Jennings
- Kentucky Milk Safety Branch Inspector Wayne Blackford
- Goode Family Farms owner Greg Goode
- Executive Director of KDDC, Tori Embry

An overview and breakdown of Milk Pricing by the Federal Milk Market Administrator was then given by FMMO representative Virginia Miller. Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMOs) establish certain provisions under which dairy processors purchase fresh milk from dairy farmers supplying a marketing area. In Federal order provisions, dairy processors are referred to as handlers and dairy farmers are known as producers. A marketing area is generally defined as a geographic area where handlers compete for packaged fluid milk sales, although other factors may be taken into account when determining the boundaries of a marketing area. Federal orders serve to maintain stable marketing relationships

State Representative Mike Pollock

for all handlers and producers supplying marketing areas, thus facilitating the complex process of marketing fresh milk. Virginia provided updated pricing information and was extremely helpful in understanding how those prices were achieved.

State FFA President Trenton Page spoke about the future of Kentucky Agriculture and how happy he is to be part of an organization that promotes so many individuals in the state's farming/agricultural sector. He assured us that the future is bright with so many who have a drive to succeed and that they will be instrumental in carrying on so many of the agricultural traditions we know and love in this state.

Keynote guest speaker and impromptu auctioneer was State Representative Mike "Sarge" Pollock. He gave a sincere heartfelt speech about Kentucky Agriculture and the Dairy industry specifically talking about how proud he is to be part of helping that industry not only sustain itself but hopefully continue to grow. Later that evening he provided lots of laughs during the auction that raised money for the Kentucky State Fair Dairy Cheese Auction.

Special Recognition was then given to Brian McAnelly on his retirement from the Kentucky Milk Safety Branch and to Ricky Gulley on his upcoming retirement from Bluegrass Ingredients. Congratulations to both!

Dr. Roger Thomson, DVM from MQ-IQ Consulting, LLC provided an excellent in depth look at several fundamentals for improving Milk Quality. He gave insight into areas to check for possible sources of contamination on both the raw and finished side of Milk Processing. He also talked about the best cleaning and sanitation practices to put in place and CIP system checks that should be performed. He also mentioned which chemicals should and could be used to clean specific areas of concern and offered advice on concentrations of those chemicals that worked most effectively. KDDC proudly sponsored this speaker as part of our Milk COUNTS program which addresses milk quality challenges.

Brian Wise, NCIMS Chair spoke about some topics discussed at the 2025 NCIMS Conference

Kentucky Milk Safety Branch Inspector Mark Brackett gave a KY State Rating Report and a brief summary of some of the specific things noted during farm inspections.

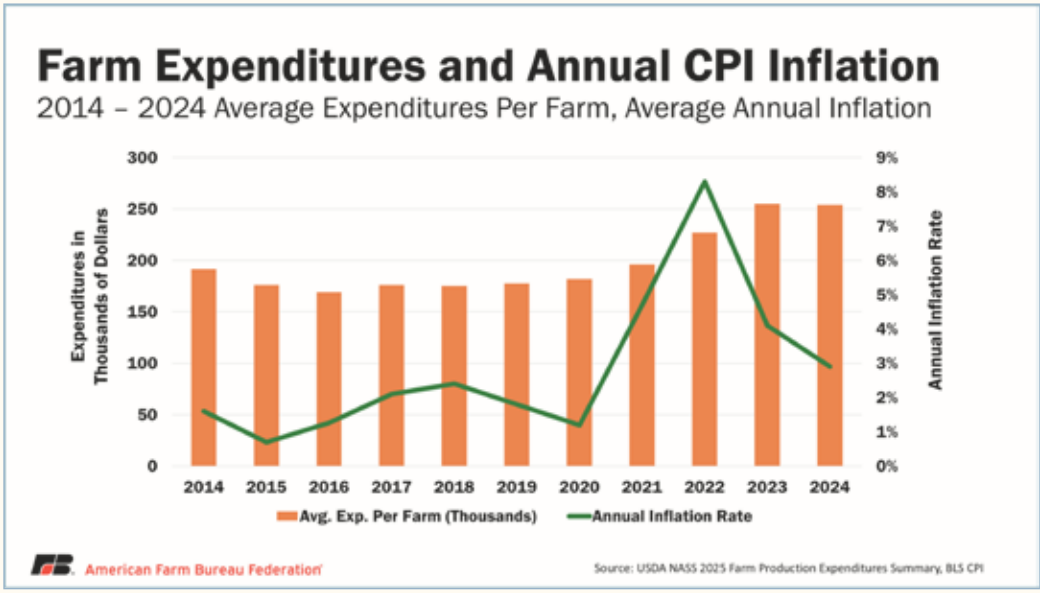
The 2025 Kentucky Milk Quality Conference highlighted many relevant topics throughout the industry and was a great meeting to network with a variety of dairy stakeholders.

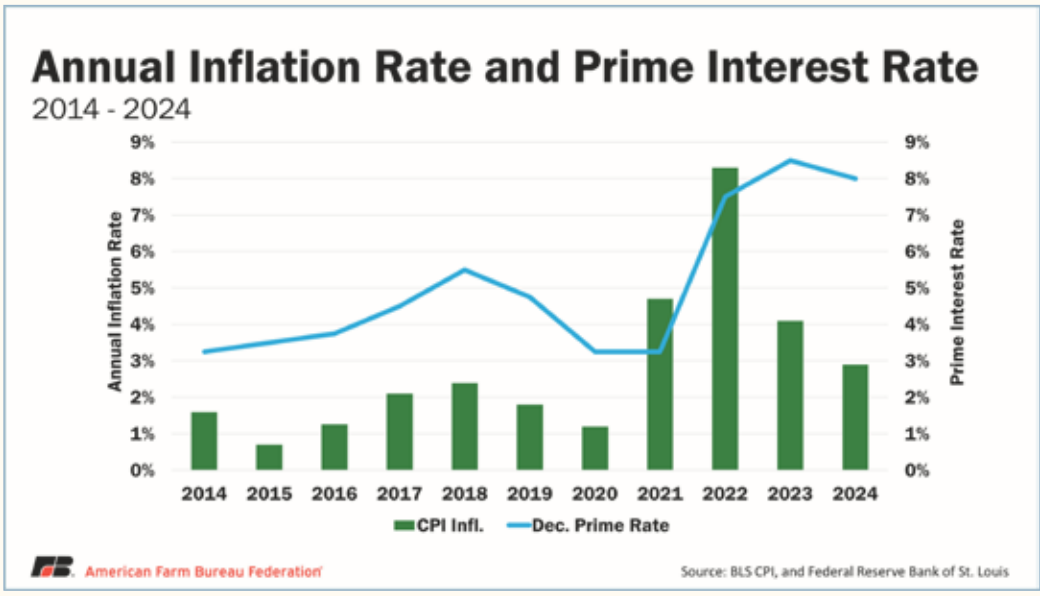
Tori Embry talks KDDC on the panel.

Inflation and Interest Continue Driving up Farmers' Costs

Bernt Nelson Economist

In 2020, the Federal Reserve (the Fed) responded to an acute recession by cutting interest rates and launching large-scale asset purchases to support credit and stimulate demand. Then, inflation in 2021 and 2022 reached levels not seen since the 1980s. To combat this, the Fed began raising interest rates in March 2022 to slow demand and reel in the money supply. While inflation has since softened, so too have prices for many of the crops grown by U.S. farmers. Meanwhile, interest rates remain above typical 21-century levels as the Fed works to address inflation. This Market Intel provides an update on inflation and the impacts on farmers.





Inflation

Inflation is the rate at which the prices for goods and services rise. As inflation increases, it pulls down the purchasing power of money, meaning each dollar does not go as far. According to the Fed, a healthy level of inflation to reflect general economic growth is about 2%. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) measures inflation using their Consumer Price Index (CPI) The most recent report was released on Aug. 12 and found that the July CPI was 2.7% higher than a year ago, on par with June projections and below general expectations. Core inflation for goods and services minus food and energy is typically more volatile and hit a five-month high of 3.1%, which is slightly higher than expected by analysts.

The Fed's primary tool to help steer the economy is the effective federal funds rate (EFFR).This is the rate banks charge to lend their excess deposits to one another to meet minimum reserve requirements. Changes in the federal funds rate directly influence the interest rates for mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and business financing. When rates go down, banks can lend at lower costs, making it cheaper for consumers to borrow and spend and for businesses to invest, which increases demand. The opposite happens when interest rates go up.

Farm Impacts

A lower inflation rate does not mean goods and services are getting cheaper; rather, it means prices are increasing at a slower pace. For farmers and ranchers, the cost of growing crops and caring for livestock has gone up exponentially in recent years. At the same time, farmers remain at the mercy of slipping commodity prices, volatile weather conditions and an uncertain trade environment.

USDA's 2025 Farm Production Expenditures Annual Summary contains the 2024 estimates of farm production expenditures like feed, farm services, rent, agricultural chemicals, fertilizer, lime and soil conditioners, interest, taxes (real estate and property), labor, fuel, farm supplies and repairs, farm improvements and construction, tractors and self-propelled farm machinery, other farm machinery, seeds and plants, trucks and autos. According to the report, total U.S. farm expenditures in 2024 are estimated at $477.6 billion, down about $4.3 billion (0.9%) from the record-setting $481.9 billion in 2023. The average expenditure per farm was $254,043 in 2024, down slightly from the record-high $255,047 in 2023. Lower inflation is partially behind the drop in expenditures because it slowed down the rise in supply costs. More importantly, falling commodity prices have reduced the price of feed for livestock.

As previously discussed in a recent Market Intel, farm expenses have been consistently higher than the prices

received for crops grown for the last five years, according to USDA's price indexes for crop producers. The gap between prices received and prices paid has grown wider due to falling prices, particularly since 2023, but this long-term trend indicates that even higher prices have not been enough to combat the rise of input and supply costs.

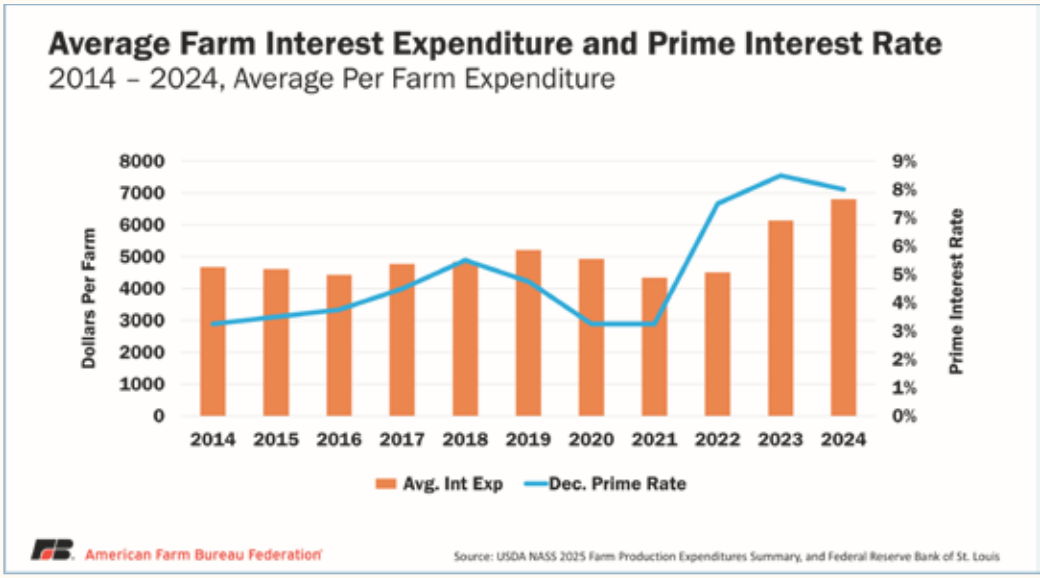
Corn and soybeans account for about 52% of all planted crop acres in the U.S., making them a significant contributor to farm revenue across the country. In the August World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report, USDA forecasted the average farm price for corn to be $3.90 per bushel in 2025/26, 35% below the marketing year average (MYA) price of $6 per bushel in 2022/23. USDA forecast the average farm price for soybeans at $10.25 per bushel in 2025/26, 23% below the 2022/23 MYA price of $13.30 per bushel. These prices, well below breakeven for the third year in a row, have driven farms to increasingly rely on credit to continue operating.

Credit

Following the Fed's adjustments since 2022, the EFFR is currently 4.33%, up from near-zero levels in 2020. EFFR is calculated daily and it's important to note that EFFR is different from the federal funds target rate.

The increases in the EFFR have a substantial influence on the prime interest rate in the U.S. The prime rate is the minimum interest that banks charge their most credit-worthy customers for borrowing money. The current prime rate is 7.5% and was set Dec. 19, 2024. The bottom line is, when the Fed increased rates, they dramatically increased the cost of borrowing money across the economy. This has happened at a time when farmers and ranchers rely more heavily on credit due to the growing gap between commodity prices and input costs.

The rise in interest rates has driven up the cost of borrowing money. According to USDA estimates, the average farm spent about $6,809, 2.7% of their total expenses, on interest in 2024. The total average interest expenditure per farm has increased by 46%, or $2,173, from $4,672 to $6,809. Meanwhile, overall expenditures have risen 33%, from $191,500 in 2014 to $254,043. The sharp rise in total farm expenditures means the steep increase in interest costs still represents only a modest share of overall spending, but credit is more critical in low price years, making it a crucial expense



that continues to increase.

While the interest increase of $2,173 per farm might seem smaller than expected, it's important to remember that not all farms carry recurring debt. This stark gap is also partly due to USDA's broad definition of a farm, which includes any operation with more than $1,000 in ag product sales — a threshold that encompasses many very small-scale or lifestyle farms not intended to provide primary income.

A financing tool commonly used by farmers and ranchers is an operating loan. An operating loan is a type of short-term loan to cover the day-to-day costs of running the farm or ranch. These loans are typically paid off and renewed every year. According to USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), about 22% of farms carried debt of some kind in 2022 when the Fed began raising interest rates. Interest rates for operating loans nearly doubled between the first quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2023. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, the median operating loan interest rate was slightly below 8% for the second consecutive quarter of 2025.

Despite increasing costs of credit, farmers continue to borrow more. The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago notes about 40% of ag bankers expected higher operating, feeder cattle and FSA guaranteed loan volumes this year than last. Higher interest rates combined with higher loan volumes have only elevated the losses being endured by many farms for the third consecutive year as they struggle to cover daily growing expenses.

The U.S. has lost 20,000 farms since the last Census of Agriculture. The census indicated 142,000 farms were lost between 2017 and 2022, that's more than 77 farms per day. Worsening credit conditions are likely to add to farm losses and bankruptcies in the days ahead.

Conclusion

Without question, inflation impacts every family in America. Small businesses like farms and ranches are especially impacted by increased cost of their inputs (like seed and fertilizer) coupled with higher interest rates on the yearly operating loans necessary to acquire those critical inputs. And layered on top of inflation and the cost of interest, are plummeting crop prices and significant declines in agricultural exports. Farm country is hoping for a break in any one of the challenges they face. Will the September meeting of the Fed provide farmers and ranchers with positive news?

EFFECT OF INSEMINATION TIMING AND SEMEN TYPE ON FERTILITY IN DAIRY AND BEEF CATTLE

Cooperative Extension Service

Les Anderson Extension Professor, University of Kentucky

Artificial insemination (AI) remains one of the most impactful reproductive technologies in cattle production, enabling accelerated genetic improvement and improved herd management. Despite decades of use, the optimal timing of insemination relative to estrus onset or hormonal synchronization system remains an important determinant of conception rate to AI.

Two recent peer-reviewed studies—Santos et al. (2025) and Purvis et al. (2025)—have provided new insights into the relationship between insemination timing, semen type, and fertility outcomes in dairy and beef cattle. These findings refine traditional management guidelines and have significant implications for improving reproductive efficiency and practical decision-making on commercial beef and dairy operations.

The study by Santos and colleagues, published in the Journal of Dairy Science, examined the influence of insemination timing on pregnancy outcomes in lactating Holstein and crossbred dairy cows across large commercial herds in Wisconsin, Texas, and Arizona. Using a combination of timed artificial insemination (TAI) protocols and automated estrus detection systems, more than 30,000 inseminations were evaluated.

Several key findings from this work included:

- Optimal timing: Pregnancy rates were highest when cows were inseminated 13 to 23 hours after the onset of estrus or after the final gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) treatment in a synchronization protocol.
- Reduced fertility outside optimal range: Cows inseminated too early (≤3 hours after estrus onset) or too late (≥24 hours) exhibited significantly lower pregnancy rates. Acceptable conception rates were observed between 3 and 24 hours after first estrus.
- Semen type: No significant difference in conception rates was observed between conventional and sex-sorted semen when insemination occurred within the optimal window.
- Pregnancy loss: The timing of insemination did not affect pregnancy loss rates between 32- and 90-days post-AI.

The study concluded that the same insemination timing principles can be effectively applied to both semen types when using modern synchronization and estrus monitoring systems. This finding is particularly relevant given the widespread use of sex-sorted semen in dairy herds to produce female offspring and manage replacement heifer supply.

This work by Santos and coworkers is extensive and ends most debate regarding when to inseminate following observed estrus or induced ovulation. But what about beef cattle? Research conducted by Purvis and colleagues at the University of Kentucky (submitted to Theriogenology) evaluated conception rates in crossbred beef females using CowManager® ear-tag sensors for real-time estrus detection. A total of 799 inseminations were analyzed over a four-year period using both conventional and sex-sorted semen.

Key findings included:

- Timing of insemination: Conception rates were highest when insemination occurred within 8 hours of estrus onset, remained stable through 23 hours, and declined significantly beyond that point. The “peak” conception rate at 8 hours post estrus was a slight increase and the more important observation is, like the work of Santos, conception rate to AI was acceptable and consistent for cows bred from 4 to 23 hours from the beginning of estrus.
- Semen type: Cows inseminated with conventional semen had higher overall conception rates (68.9%) than those inseminated with sex-sorted semen (56.9%).
- Sex of semen: No significant difference in conception rate was observed between male- and female-sexed semen.
- Timing–semen interaction: Timing effects were consistent across semen types, indicating that the optimal insemination window applies broadly.
- These results suggest that insemination can occur at any point up to 23 hours after estrus detection without a measurable decline in conception rate, providing greater flexibility in management decisions.

Across both studies, the findings were highly complementary:

- The optimal insemination window for achieving maximum fertility is approximately 13 to 23 hours after estrus onset, regardless of production system (dairy or beef). Acceptable conception rates achievable from 4 to 23 hours after first estrus.
- Sex-sorted semen performs comparably to conventional semen when used within this optimal interval, demonstrating that advancements in semen processing have largely mitigated earlier fertility disadvantages.
- The traditional “AM–PM rule”, recommending insemination 12 hours after first heat observation, appears unnecessarily restrictive under modern management conditions.

Practical Implications

These studies collectively support a refined and evidence-based approach to artificial insemination management:

1. Producers can achieve high fertility rates by targeting insemination approximately 4–23 hours after estrus detection.
2. In beef cattle, a management protocol that includes estrus detection patches can make timing of insemination easy. Simply inseminate cows at a convenient time after patch activation.
3. Sex-sorted semen can be incorporated into breeding programs without special adjustments to insemination timing.
4. Modern estrus detection technologies and synchronization protocols enhance the precision and efficiency of reproductive management in both dairy and beef systems.

Conclusion

The combined evidence from Santos et al. (2025) and Purvis et al. (2025) demonstrates that precise timing of insemination remains an important determinant of reproductive success, but the optimal window is broader and more flexible than previously assumed. These findings provide science-based guidance for improving conception outcomes, reducing management constraints, and supporting the continued adoption of advanced reproductive technologies in cattle production systems.

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Milk Prices

FMMO 5
www.malouisville.com
September 2025
Class 1 Advanced Price
(@3.5% BF)
$24.30

October 2025
Class 1 Advanced Price
(@3.5% BF)
$23.64

FMMO 7
www.fmmatlanta.com
September 2025
Class 1 Advanced Price
(@3.5%)
$24.50

October 2025
Class 1 Advanced Price
(@3.5%)
$23.84

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they age for a minimum of 60 days. The group got to tour the whole operation. From production, preparation, and then to table, where we got to eat 100% organic vanilla and blueberry ice cream. Fun fact: Traders Point Creamery is Indiana's first USDA certified organic dairy.

Day two of the tour was spent at the World Dairy Expo. They had 56,250 attendees at this year's expo to see the world's most distinguished show cattle and high-end trade show. Over 2300 head of cattle were registered for this year's shows. The trophy for most entries this year went to the Holstein breed which had 468 head of cattle, with the Brown Swiss coming second with 384 head. Supreme Champion this year went to Golden-Oaks Temptres-Red-ET, owned by Milksource, Fischer, Steincrest and Crescentmead of Kaukauna, WI. There were 534 companies represented in the trade show, representing 42 states, 26 countries, and 7 Canadian provinces. There were 2,915 international attendees from nearly 100 countries, with top 3 being Canada, Mexico, and Brazil.

Our third day consisted of two farm stops with our first stop being at Golden Oaks Farm in Wauconda, Illinois. Golden Oaks is a big-time dairy and genetics operation which was founded in 1948 by the Crown family, focusing on Holsteins. Their goal is simple, making money efficiently by producing high quality milk and superior genetics. They milk around 720 head and have about 680 young stock. They focus on breeding "sound, well-balanced cows" that are productive but also genetically strong. Their production goal is to hit 19 million pounds of milk every year. They also plant and harvest corn, alfalfa, and oatlage. On this tour, the group got to explore these goals and see how they raise their cattle from calf to cow. Fun fact: 99% of their herd is officially registered!

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KDDC is supported in part by a grant from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund

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The group also had the pleasure of stopping at Homestead Dairy in Plymouth, Indiana. Homestead Dairy had a humble beginning, starting with only nine cows in 1945. That transitioned to 110 cows in 1979 and has grown to a whopping 4,800 cow dairy. Their mission is to supply the highest quality milk in a sustainable way, while having a positive impact on the cows, business, and community. The tour group got to tour each inch of this operation, with two technological practices being noteworthy. The anaerobic methane digester, which they have dubbed "Homestead Green Energy". This technology uses cow manure to produce methane gas. These gas-powered generators are used on the farm, amending 800 to 1,000 kilowatts of electricity per day which is then sold back to power companies in the area. The byproduct from the digester is clean organic biosolid that is recycled for bedding. The other technology is their robotic milking system. In 2017, the farm built a new facility which utilizes 36 robotic stalls. Because the cows are milked voluntarily, this has resulted in lower stress and reportedly 5-8 pounds more milk per cow daily. This also provides a large amount of data for individual health monitoring. Fun fact: the kilowatts sold back to the power companies in that area have enough to power roughly 1,000 homes.

The last leg of our trip consisted of two stops. Our first stop was Beer Dairy, located in Milford, Indiana. Beer Dairy is run by two brothers, Jeff and Regg. They milk 960 Holsteins in a double 12 parlor system. The cattle are housed in a cross ventilated free stall barn with cooling pads. The Beer family is very involved in dairy technologies like the implementation of Smart Soakers and are trying out a calving camera app. They also had a manure separation system, which they used to help decrease their cost of bedding by recycling sand bedding. They have a commercial herd and raise their own heifers as well as breed for beef on dairy and utilize genomics for those matings. Our producers were able to explore each aspect of the operation to see all their facilities and equipment.

Our last stop was at Kuehnert Dairy Farm, which is both a dairy and agritourism operation, located near Fort Wayne, Indiana. Kuehnert Dairy Farm milks 300 Holsteins with their Lely A4 robots. Kuehnert also incorporates many technologies in their operation

such as a Lely Juno feed pusher, AI24 cow monitoring system, Lely calf feeder, and hoop style barns for their heifers. Kuehnert milk house is where they bottle and sell their own milk, as well as make other value-added products like seasonally flavored milk, cheese curds, ice cream and butter. The Udder Up Café serves as their restaurant which is right next to their free-stall barn. The timing of the tour allowed us to see their Fall Festival held on farm which makes it a highly successful agritourism operation. Many schools, businesses, and other visitors utilize their available event spaces throughout the year. Kuehnert Dairy Farm provides many fun attractions for their fall festival such as a corn maze, farm-style America Ninja Warrior course, and other creative ideas to reach the community and hopefully leave with a bigger appreciation for agriculture.

This year's tour was educational and overall, a great way for our producers to fellowship with one another. We got to see and learn about the many aspects of dairy. So don't forget to mark your calendars for next year's tour, we will be happy to have you!

SOUTHEAST DAIRY
BUSINESS INNOVATION INITIATIVE
TN, KY, NC, WV, VA, SC, GA, AL, MS, LA, AR, FL

FROZEN DESSERT UNIVERSITY
CARPIGIANI

You're Invited!

TO ATTEND THE CARPIGIANI FROZEN DESSERT UNIVERSITY IN HIGH POINT, NORTH CAROLINA JANUARY 12 - 16, 2026

This course includes Level I training from frozen dessert experts and is designed to equip participants with essential skills and knowledge needed to kickstart a successful venture in frozen desserts.

What to Expect:

- Fundamentals of Success: Learn core principles of launching and operating a thriving frozen dessert business
- Hands-On Mastery: Experience the art of crafting American Ice Cream, Italian Artisanal Gelato, creamy Soft Serve, and more
- Comprehensive Education: gain insights into the diverse landscape of frozen desserts in North America

Participation in the course is limited to 20 people from permitted dairy businesses in the Southeast. SDBII funds will be available to defray transportation and lodging costs up to $1,000 per participant, as well as pay for registration in the course.

Funding for this opportunity is available through USDA-AMS grants.

SOUTHEAST DAIRY
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FROZEN DESSERT UNIVERSITY
CARPIGIANI

DAILY AGENDA:

Day 1: Frozen Dessert World & Ice Cream Making

- Explore the exciting world of frozen desserts, learn about different equipment, and grasp the basics of starting a business. Enjoy hands-on ice cream making, perfecting the craft of American-style treats.

Day 2: Hygiene Session, Gelato Making, & Business

- Prioritize hygiene in dessert creation, delving into the crucial heat treatment process. Elevate your business knowledge while getting hands-on with Italian-style artisanal gelato.

Day 3: Store Operation, Fruit Ice Cream, Sorbet, & Water Ice

- Master the keys to running a successful dessert store, learning the ins and outs of operations. Create fruit-based ice creams, delightful sorbets, and master the art of refreshing water ice.

Day 4: Novelties (Cakes & Popsicles), Soft Serve, Dairy Free-Creations, Business Session

- Elevate your business acumen, exploring advanced strategies in Business Lv.4. Get hands-on with cakes, delve into dairy-free desserts, and gain insights into food cost analysis for optimal business management.

KDDC is supported in part by a grant from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund

Little North American at EKU

Gracie Lynch, EKU Animal Science/Pre-Vet Senior

(L to R) Gracie Lynch: Little NAILE Committee Chair, Sarah Anderson: Sheep leader, Lance Munday: Sheep leader, Abby Harris: Swine leader, Bella Goodlett: Dairy leader, Audrey Spry: Dairy leader

This year was Eastern Kentucky University's thirteenth year hosting the Little NAILE and the third year it included hog and sheep showman. The EKU Block and Bridle club hosts this show to teach students how to take an average production animal and turn it into a show animal in roughly 6 weeks. The students pick their animals from the dairy, swine, and sheep herds at Meadowbrook Farm. The student showmen meet with their student leaders to attend showmanship clinics where they learn skills on how to prepare their animals for the show and how to present it in the ring.

Many participants have little to no prior experience with livestock. Through this event, students gain responsibility, confidence, and a strong appreciation for the value of hard work. The week before the show, dairy showmen must feed, water, and walk their animals twice daily. On the morning of the show, it's common to see students at the farm as early as 5 a.m., bathing their animals and putting the finishing touches on clipping.

Students are judged on showmanship in the ring and the top 2 showmen of each species will advance to the Round Robin competition. In the Round Robin competition, students are judged for their showmanship abilities with all species and often have to show animals they are not familiar with.

Following the competition, students, faculty, and families gather for the annual chili cook-off. During the cook-off, the club hosts a silent auction and sells raffle tickets for a chance to win half a hog. Proceeds from these fundraisers help support the Block and Bridle Club's trip to the National Convention.

The Little NAILE is one of the most anticipated agricultural events of the year at EKU. This event brings faculty and students together to gain knowledge and develop camaraderie. Through this, and other similar events, EKU's Block and Bridle Club fosters the next generation of agricultural leaders, preparing students through lifelong skills, teaching them to lead with confidence, and developing a deep appreciation for the agriculture industry.

Lincoln County Farm Recognized as Legacy Farm

Michelle Sidwell

A "Legacy Farm" in Kentucky is a designation from the Kentucky Farm Bureau recognizing a family farm for its long-standing commitment to agriculture and its community in addition to preservation of its ancestral land.

These farms are nominated by local County Farm Bureaus and represent a history of farming that strengthens rural communities. The designation highlights a family's dedication to their land and way of life over multiple generations.

On September 24, 2025, the Homeplace Farm/Schlappi Family was recognized by the Lincoln County Farm Bureau as a recipient of the Legacy Farm award.

The Schlappi Farm was established in the late 1800's when Casper Schlappi left Gadmen, Switzerland and traveled by boat to Pennsylvania. During his journey across the water, he met his future wife, Anna. It wasn't long before they were recruited to come to Ottenheim, Kentucky to the "land of milk and honey" - as it was promoted. Upon arrival, they faced more hardships than they had left behind in Switzerland. Briars, rocky land, and very few cleared fields for farming were just a few of the challenges new immigrants faced in a strange new land. With extreme perseverance and determination, the family has continued farming the land since the late 1800's.

Marshal Schlappi took over the farm from his father, Fred in 1953 when he returned from the Korean War. The true family operation continued milking cows until 1999 when health issues forced the family to quit milking and sell the cows.

Timothy Sneed was eleven at the time and was so disappointed because he had always said he wanted to milk cows, he had grown up helping on the farm. Fast forward to 2014 when milk prices reached an all time high - he started the dairy back up and continues milking today. This is one young farmer who followed his dream.

Timothy Sneed, Eunice Schlappi, Eileen Schlappi Sneed and Dorothea Schlappi.

2025 World Dairy Expo

The 2025 World Dairy Expo has come and gone. Congratulations to these Kentucky champion members!

Milking Shorthorn
Jeremy and Kelsey Kinslow
Smiths Grove KY

Intermediate Champion Female • Total Performance Winner 1st Place • Holstein Marketplace Sires International Type & Production Award

Brown Swiss
Kylie & Micah Sparrow
Stamping Ground, KY

Intermediate Champion Female of Junior Show Reserve Intermediate Champion Female

KDDC is supported in part by a grant from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund

Milk. A part of everything that's good.

The Southland Dairy Farmers' Mobile Dairy Classroom is on the road year-round giving free milking demonstrations at schools, fairs, festivals, libraries, camps and other various events across Kentucky. Our trained instructor, Isreal, and his cow, Olivia, present to men, women, and children of all ages showing firsthand exactly where their milk comes from. Spectators are given a lasting visual while learning just how much work goes into getting milk from the farm to their table and the care that is put into each glass. In addition to the how, the importance of dairy in a well-balanced diet is also taught, emphasizing the 13 essential nutrients found in each glass. The lesson goes over why the vitamins and minerals found in milk is crucial for both developing and maintaining a healthy body, making milk and its products vital for all ages.

In addition to the milking demonstration, Southland Dairy Farmer promotional items and educational material are handed out to remind people to drink their milk. Children love the cups that show them how high they need to fill the milk, so they are sure to get a full 8 ounce serving at each meal. Our coloring books keep kids engaged with what they learned, and some parents even find themselves enjoying a few of the activities within. Guidebooks and curriculum cards given out to the teachers ensure the lesson can continue even after the classroom drives away.

If you would like the Southland Dairy Farmers' Mobile Dairy Classroom to visit your local schools or other events you can make a request through our website at southlanddairyfarmers.com, or contact Isreal directly by emailing him at imullins@southlanddairyfarmers.com or calling 606-416-6848.

Promoting Dairy Nutrition Through the First 1,000 Days Initiative

Lila Higginbotham

Dairy foods and beverages, which provide seven of the 14 nutrients designated by the American Academy of Pediatrics as essential for brain development, play a vital role in supporting optimal brain and cognitive growth during a child's first 1,000 days, from pregnancy to age two. In support of the federation's efforts to educate healthcare providers on dairy's importance during this critical growth milestone, The Dairy Alliance's Community Wellness team developed a patient-friendly educational toolkit that highlights the nutritional benefits of dairy in supporting early growth and development. Impact results are expected in October 2025, and if successful in reaching pediatricians, the initiative will expand to additional targeted areas in 2026.

The Dairy Alliance continues to engage healthcare professionals across Kentucky to strengthen trust in dairy's role in brain development. At the Kentucky Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics conference in Louisville, Ethan Mattingly, Manager of Community Wellness, shared resources with more than 80 attendees, highlighting dairy's importance during the First 1,000 Days of Life. Earlier this year, Mattingly also presented at the Kentucky Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Conference, emphasizing the First 1,000 Days initiative, sustainability, and 2050 stewardship goals, which resulted in a 120% increase in trust movement among attendees.

To further engage professionals on this topic, The Dairy Alliance hosted a webinar on nutrition during the First 1,000 Days that attracted 373 attendees. Dairy foods were spotlighted as an affordable, accessible, and appealing way to help meet key nutrient needs in early childhood. In addition, a Mother's Day social media campaign featuring a registered dietitian's story about using dairy during pregnancy and postpartum had a reach of more than 1 million people, reinforcing how dairy continues to resonate with both health professionals and families alike.

These ongoing efforts reflect The Dairy Alliance's commitment to advancing nutrition education and strengthening relationships with healthcare professionals across the Southeast. By equipping pediatricians, dietitians, and community partners with credible, research-backed resources, the organization ensures families throughout the region have access to accurate information about dairy's role in early childhood development.

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Kentucky Dairy
Development Council

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DEC 3-5	Kentucky Farm Bureau Annual Meeting *Galt House Louisville, KY*
JAN 19-21	Georgia Dairy Conference *Savannah, GA*
FEB 5-9	North American Farmers Direct Marketing Assoc. *Agritourism Convention Expo Orlando, FL*
FEB 24-25	Kentucky Dairy Conference *Bowling Green, KY*

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