

Spartan Dairy Newsletter

Fall 2026 Vol. 6 No. 3



Beyond the barn

The Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center Campaign

Awards, honors, accomplishments	Student summer research	Detecting estrous after calving	Dairy processing investment
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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DAIRY CATTLE TEACHING AND RESEARCH CENTER CAMPAIGN

The new Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center (DCTRC) reflects MSU's ongoing commitment to Michigan's dairy industry and rural communities. Advocacy from our community led the state of Michigan to invest in this facility – but to fully fund it, additional private support is needed.

We believe that our generosity will inspire our industry partners to join us in supporting this unique facility. **This is our chance** to show what Michigan dairy producers can accomplish together.



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT:

- Honor a farm from your family's history
- Memorialize a loved one
- Stake your farm's claim on the future

Michigan Dairy Hall of Fame



The **MSU Dairy Facility** is dedicated to serving Michigan's dairy industry and the hundreds of family farms – past and present – that have shaped it.

Our farmers have played a critical role in advocating for this center, and in supporting the education, research and outreach that happen here.

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF OUR FRIENDS
IN MICHIGAN DAIRY

\$10K	\$25K	\$50K
Anthony Hall Dairy	Farms Wharton Dairy	In Memory of Jack Breslin
Farm Lane Dairy	Beaumont Tower	



GIVING LEVELS

Gifts can be pledged over three to five years, making it easier for farms of all sizes to participate.

Under \$10,000: recognition alongside other producer-supporters

\$10,000, \$25,000, \$50,000: tiered recognition on the Michigan Dairy Hall of Fame

\$50,000 and up: space-naming opportunities

“We’re signaling to lenders, vendors and everyone we work with that producers believe in this. That this facility matters. And that there’s room for everyone to join us in supporting the future of this industry.”

Doug Chapin

Board Chairman, Michigan Milk Producers Association

With over 400,000 dairy cattle in Michigan, if each producer donates just \$2.50 per cow, we can collectively raise \$1 million to support this cause. Supporters of this producers’ campaign will be recognized at the DCTRC.



WAYS TO GIVE:

Online:



give.msu.edu/?sid=20997

Mail a check to:

University Advancement
535 Chestnut Road, Room 300
East Lansing, MI 48824

Note: Make check payable to “Michigan State University specify “DCTRC Producers Campaign” in the memo line

Contact Advancement:

Kyle Cutler | 616.204.6648 | cutlerky@msu.edu

Our dairy farm classrooms are available for courses, corporate meetings, and community groups. Email ABR.DCTRC.Admin@msu.edu for more information.



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Dairy at MSU



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Dairy at MSU

Dairy Spotlight

Tracy Burnett and Paloma Albino Ribeiro



Dr. Tracy Burnett
Dairy Educator

Dr. Tracy Burnett graduated from the University of British Columbia in 2019 with a Ph.D. in Applied Animal Biology, having previously earned both her B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees at the same institution. She first became involved in the dairy industry during her undergraduate studies when she worked as a student employee at the University of British Columbia's Dairy Education and Research Centre. She fed calves, assisted with field work, and participated in daily herd management activities.

Through these experiences, Tracy developed a strong interest in the complexities of dairy production, particularly dairy cattle stress, reproduction, and health. Her doctoral research focused on the use of automated activity monitors and the relationship between estrous expression and fertility outcomes, including conception, ovulation, and pregnancy loss. She also explored ways to effectively integrate automated activity monitoring technology into reproductive management programs on dairy farms.

Prior to joining Michigan State University Extension, Tracy spent six years at the University of Guelph's Ridgetown Campus in Ontario, where she held a teaching and research position. Her work focused on using technology to improve reproductive management and animal health outcomes on dairy farms. Tracy joined MSU Extension in July 2026 as a Dairy Production Educator serving Michigan's Thumb region. She looks forward to building relationships with local dairy producers and industry partners and is excited to continue supporting the dairy industry through research-based education, outreach, and applied programming.

Are you a dairy producer in Michigan's Thumb Region?
You can contact Tracy at 517-744-1235 or burne200@msu.edu.



Paloma Albino Ribeiro
Visiting Scholar

Paloma Albino Ribeiro is a new visiting scholar at the College of Veterinary Medicine working in the Trindade lab. Under the guidance of Dr. Pedro Trindade, she is studying how environmental conditions and management practices affect cattle welfare and thermal comfort. She is particularly interested in using precision livestock farming technologies and sensors to monitor animal behavior and environmental conditions.

These technologies, including video recording, thermal sensors, and activity monitors, can support dairy producers in identifying changes in animal welfare and comfort. In turn, this allows farmers to make management decisions with recent and accurate information. Right now, Paloma is working with calves at the new MSU Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center, investigating thermal regulation under different housing conditions.

Prior to arriving at MSU, Paloma received a competitive fellowship from the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) with the support of her advisers in Brazil, Dr. Gustavo Moura and Dr. Vinicius Fonseca. This fellowship allows her to spend a semester at Michigan State University conducting research. As a student at São Paulo State University in Brazil, she focused on animal welfare, animal bioclimatology, environmental monitoring, and technological applications in livestock production. She is a member of the Innovation and Sustainability in Animal Biometeorology research group and is in her fifth year of studies.

News and Updates

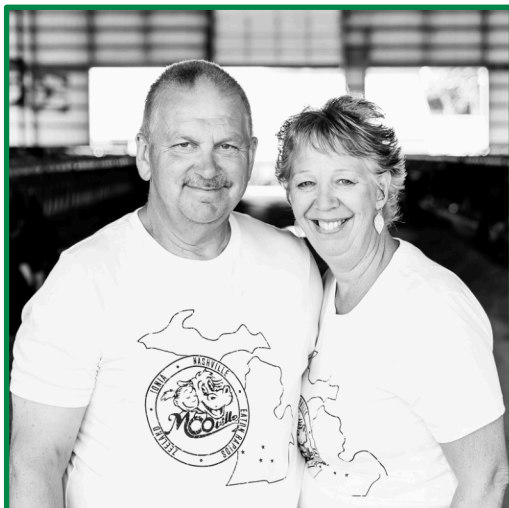
Recognizing deserving dairy leaders

Darwin and Kathy Sneller of Starward Farms were inducted into the Michigan Farmers Hall of Fame on September 12th, 2026. They have been farming for more than 50 years on a 943-acre registered Holstein dairy and cash crop operation. The farm, which began around 1952, includes roughly 100 milking cows and produces corn, soybeans, wheat, alfalfa, and sugarbeets. Their commitment to the dairy industry includes extensive service with the Holstein Association, where Darwin served as president at the county, district, and state, levels, as well as leadership with the Huron County Promotions group. Darwin has also served as a 4-H leader and a dairy judging coach. Their accomplishments have been recognized with the Holstein Master Breeder award in 2018 and the MHA Distinguished Person Award in 2026. *Image and text courtesy of Michigan Farmers Hall of Fame.*



Dr. Mark Fox was named Bovine Practitioner of the Year by the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AAPB). He was nominated by friend and former classmate Dr. Pamela Ruegg, currently a faculty member at the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine. This award is the highest honor given by the AAPB, and recognizes a veterinarian in active practice who is active in organized veterinary medicine and has made significant contributions to bovine medicine. Speaking about his career in veterinary medicine, Dr. Fox said, "We work with animals, but ultimately, it's about people and relationships. If you approach those relationships with honesty and a willingness to be part of something bigger than yourself, you can build a very rewarding career." *Image courtesy of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners.*

Four new honorees of the Michigan Dairy and Memorial Scholarship Foundation. Doug and Louisa Westendorp of Westvale-View dairy and MOO-Ville Creamery, Jim Sipiorski of CentralStar, and Max Dunseth of the Holstein Association-USA were recognized as the newest honorees in the fall of 2026.



News and Updates

Animal science student activities



The Animal Science department welcomed the largest freshman class since the Dairy Concentration was established at Michigan State University in 2022.

This record-breaking class of 28 students brings enthusiasm and a deep commitment to growing their knowledge of the dairy industry, while representing five different U.S. states. They will join nearly 50 other MSU Dairy students for a year of learning, hands-on dairy experiences, and community building. Here's to a great semester and an even brighter future for the next generation of dairy leaders!

Dairy Education Programs

Michigan State University™



Follow Michigan State Dairy Education on Facebook to see more photos!

The Michigan State University and Michigan 4-H Dairy Judging teams were on the road this past weekend to kick off the season in Harrisburg, PA.

These students continue to grow, refine their skills, and demonstrate the hard work they've put in all year. During the trip the teams practiced at Dream-On Holsteins and visited Hershey, PA.



The MSU Dairy Judging Program officially kicked off the season at the Maryland State Fair! The MSU Collegiate, Ag-Tech, and 4-H teams spent five days immersed in a dairy judging boot camp which included evaluating high-quality cattle, delivering multiple sets of reasons, sharpening their skills for the year ahead, and creating plenty of team memories.

All-American Dairy Show Harrisburg, PA



Team Members (L-R): Austin Preston (4-H), Chloe Lawrason (College), Elena Tanin (4-H), Laci Woodruff (4-H), Amy Kern (College), Gracie Trick (4-H), Bryce Ritter (Ag Tech), Kelsey Gruner (4-H), Georgia Eaton (Ag Tech), Ross Kelsey (College), Bette Eggink (College), and Coach Joe Domecq.

News and Updates



Oscar Reyes

Applied nutrition in action

This summer, master's student Oscar Reyes stepped into the pens of modern dairy nutrition at Riverview LLP in Morris, Minnesota. His objective: to put himself in the shoes of a nutritionist and hone the practical skills required for providing technical support in today's dairy landscape. What he gained was a firsthand look at how research moves from concepts to commercial execution across sites with thousands of heads.

For graduate students in dairy science, doing research on commercial facilities offers a distinct perspective compared to controlled university research trials. On a commercial site, statistical power comes from sheer volume, and success relies heavily on logistics, team communication, and understanding practical variability of daily farm flow.

Balancing Science and Economics on the Farm

During his time in Minnesota, Oscar led a trial evaluating transition cow health, specifically focusing on preventing clinical hypocalcemia (milk fever). While negative-DCAD (dietary cation-anion difference) diets are the traditional standard for transition cow management, incorporating zeolites represents a different approach to controlling blood calcium dynamics, at a financial premium. With 50 to 60 calvings a day at the primary trial site, the group had the platform to test a combined DCAD + zeolite approach at scale. Out of roughly 1,300 calvings evaluated during the trial period, they recorded just 12 total cases of clinical milk fever in the first month of data collection. Four cases were in the treatment group and eight were in the control group.

While these initial results are encouraging, on-farm research requires deeper analysis. Recent herd culling dynamics and seasonal management factors mean data collection must continue over time to confirm trends. From a technical support standpoint, the scientific question quickly becomes an economic one: At an estimated cost of about \$400 per clinical hypocalcemia case (factoring in immediate treatment, diagnostic time, labor, and lost milk throughout lactation), does the reduction in incidence outweigh the added cost of the zeolites? This strategy can improve animal welfare as it reduces the overall incidence of illness throughout the herd while promoting the efficient use of resources.

Lessons from the Feed Pad

The biggest takeaway from a summer working with the technical team at Riverview LLP is that high-level nutrition strategies mean very little without sound herd management and strong team execution. Reading a farm requires walking the pens, checking feed consistency, observing cow comfort, utilizing modern resources to follow trends, and recognizing the hard work executed daily by frontline crews.

Whether it was covering haylage piles in the summer heat or assisting night shifts in maternity, this experience reinforced why applied science matters. As I wrap up my master's degree at Michigan State, this experience has provided a clear view of how academic research directly informs the decisions made on modern dairies every day.



Cows at Riverview LLP where MSU graduate student Oscar Reyes spent his summer. Photo credit: Oscar Reyes

By Oscar Reyes
Animal Science graduate student

Management tips



Pedro Trindade

Managing calf comfort in cold weather

Cold stress affects welfare and takes energy away from growth and immunity in young calves. What do we know about good management practices for calf jackets? You may think that calves in nature never had a jacket, and that is partly true. The wild cattle ancestors of today's dairy breeds, especially those that evolved in cooler climates, had a jacket of their own: a thicker hair coat than today's dairy calves. Even so, wild calves faced health and welfare challenges that we should not accept today. We want calves to grow well with as few stressors as possible, because good health and growth early in life support future milk production and farm efficiency.

Young calves have a hard time keeping their body temperature steady in their first weeks of life for four main reasons:

Size: they are small, so they have a lot of skin for their size

Skin: their skin is thin and they have little body fat to keep them warm

Circulation: they cannot reduce blood flow to the skin as well as adult cows to hold in heat

Rumen: their rumen is not yet working, so it cannot produce heat the way an adult cow's rumen does.

These same weeks are when calves build their own immune defenses, and cold stress can disrupt this process, making calves more likely to get sick.



A calf wearing a jacket in late spring. Photo credit: Pedro Trindade

For Michiganders, a jacket on a young calf may be a good option, especially for calves housed individually, although no study has yet tested calf jackets in Michigan weather conditions. Over the last five winters, monthly average daily temperatures in Michigan ranged from 6.8°F to 41.5°F from December to February and cold waves brought temperatures as low as -19°F, as recorded in Grand Rapids in January 2026.

One more point for cold months: disbudding causes inflammatory pain that can affect calves' ability to maintain body temperature. Good pain control (local anesthesia plus a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) is even more important when disbudding happens in cold weather. With national and international collaborators, the Trindade lab is studying how disbudding pain affects the way calves cope with cold and welfare-health-production outcomes.

Good Management Practices:

Keep jackets clean: a jacket soiled with feces holds moisture against the skin and can spread pathogens. Check jackets, especially when a calf has diarrhea, and change or wash soiled jackets right away.

Keep calves dry: put a jacket on only after the newborn calf is completely dry. Run a hand under the jacket daily and, if the hair feels damp, remove the jacket until the calf is dry.

Take extra care in transition months: from fall to winter and winter to spring, temperatures can change a lot within the same day. A jacket that is right on a cold morning can be too warm at the afternoon peak, and the calf may sweat. If its hair is still wet when temperatures drop in the evening, the calf has a much harder time keeping warm.

Wash jackets between calves: jackets can carry manure and pathogens from one calf to the next, so wash and fully dry them before reuse.

Questions or suggestions? Email me at trindad4@msu.edu! I would love to hear about your experiences with calf jackets and your ideas for new research that meets the needs of dairy producers.

*By Pedro Trindade
Assistant Professor*

Management tips



Augusto Madureira

The cow that doesn't show heat: What is she really telling us?

New research shows a missed heat alert early postpartum isn't just an inconvenience, it is one of the earliest signals of a cow's overall fertility, and a closer look at why so many “quiet” cows are being misread.

Why does an early heat predict good fertility?

Across thousands of lactating Holstein cattle, cows that showed at least one estrus alert within the voluntary waiting period (VWP) were 3.4 times more likely to be bred off a spontaneous detected heat, had 59% greater odds of conceiving at first service, and were 75% more likely to be pregnant by 150 days in milk. This is independent of the herd, country, or monitoring brand, which tells us this isn't a coincidence of one farm's management.

A cow that shows a strong, detectable heat early in lactation has almost certainly already resumed normal ovarian cyclicity, and cycling early is tied to how well she recovered from the stress of calving: no uterine infection, acceptable body condition loss, and no major metabolic disorders like ketosis.

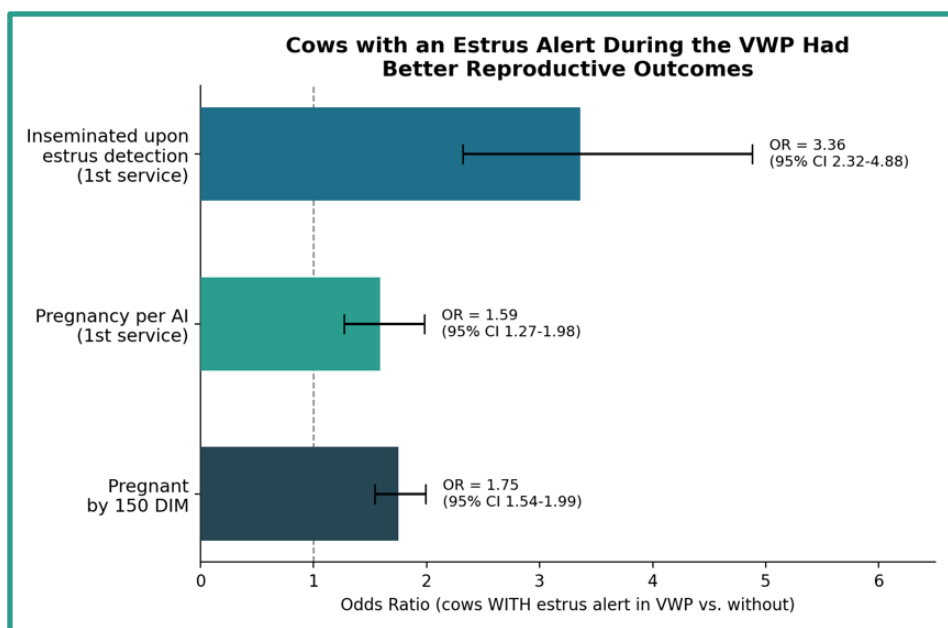
In other words, an early heat is the cow telling us her whole transition period went reasonably well. Cows that don't show heats early in lactation tend to carry that disadvantage through the entire lactation: lower conception rates, more days open, a greater chance of pregnancy loss later and greater chances of being culled from the herd.

Why does “no alert” not mean “not cycling”?

A recent study evaluated 2,198 lactating Holstein cows across seven commercial monitoring brands, from multiple countries, and evaluated the accuracy of the monitor based on serial collection of blood progesterone, which was used as a gold standard to confirm ovulation.

When comparing the blood progesterone results to the alerts given by the monitor, nearly 80% of cows had truly resumed cyclicity by about 49 days in milk, but only 64% ever triggered an estrus alert on the monitor. Having an alert within the VWP had a sensitivity of 70% (correctly identified cows as cycling), specificity of 60% (correctly identified cows as not cycling), and a negative predictive value of only 35%, meaning a “no alert” reading on the monitor is a poor guarantee that a cow hasn't cycled.

Roughly 3 out of 4 cows with no detected heat had, in fact, already ovulated, and performance varied widely among monitors, with sensitivity ranging from 34% to 92% across study groups. On the other hand, the positive predictive value was 88%, meaning the occurrence of an alert in early lactation is a great indicator that the cow is likely back cycling again.



The pooled odds ratio comparing cows with at least one estrus alert during the VWP to cows with none. Image credit: Augusto Madureira

Management tips

The first estrus following calving is often characterized by weak or undetectable estrous behavior. Elevated exposure to estrogen during late gestation may influence the behavioral manifestation of the first postpartum estrous cycle, despite the occurrence of normal ovulation. Thus, a failure to detect estrus during this period may reflect limitations and the reduced intensity of estrous expression rather than the monitoring system not functioning well or the absence of normal reproductive activity.

What does this mean for breeding decisions?

Targeted reproductive management is a data driven herd management approach that uses individual cow monitoring technology to customize breeding strategies instead of applying the same protocol to the whole herd. Cows with a detected heat are strong candidates for spontaneous breeding, with less reliance on synchronization protocols. Cows with no alerts are good candidates for synchronization, but producers should expect that a large portion of that group could be cycling normally already, just silently, rather than assuming the whole group is not cycling.

The bottom line

- An estrus alert during the VWP signals a healthy transition period, cows with an alert had 55–99% greater odds of pregnancy.
- A “no alert” reading doesn't mean “not cycling.” About 3 of 4 undetected cows had already ovulated, likely due to a weak or silent first heat rather than true anestrus.
- Monitors are strong at confirming cows are cycling (88% positive predictive value) but weak at ruling detecting non-cycling/ anestrus cows (35% negative predictive value).
- A simple strategy of spontaneous breeding for cows that show heat and synchronization protocols for cows that don't show heat can cut protocol use and cost without sacrificing pregnancy rate.

By Augusto Madureira
Assistant Professor, Animal Sciences



Cows at the MSU Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center wear activity monitors (green, below the number) as part of the heat detection strategy. Photo credit: MMPA

Want to discuss fertility on your dairy farm? Email Augusto at madurei2@msu.edu



MSU Dairy Industry Tailgate



October 17, 2026

Start Time: TBD (~4 hours before kickoff)

**New MSU Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center
3965 College Rd, Lansing, MI 48910**

For more information:



After a busy harvest season, spend a day with Spartan fans and fellow dairy enthusiasts at the MSU Dairy Industry Tailgate! Join us for complimentary food and drinks in advance of the MSU vs. Northwestern football game. Free parking at the dairy and a short drive to the pavillion for game day parking and shuttle. Guests may stay to watch the game, food and beverage service ends at kickoff.



If you are unable to access the material online, please contact ANR Event Services at 517-353-3175 or events@anr.msu.edu.

Research drill down

Michigan sees dramatic investment in dairy

Michigan milk production has been on the rise for years, and it seems processors are taking notice. 2026 marks a big year for Michigan dairy with major expansions underway at Fairlife's plant in Coopersville, Chobani's "La Colombe" plant in Norton Shores, Foremost Farm's plant in Greenville, Hudsonville Ice Cream's plant in Holland, and Michigan Milk Producers' supply plants in Ovid, Remus, and Constantine. These investments (mapped in Figure 1) have a broad geographic reach in Michigan's lower peninsula.

What is happening?

Much of the new investment seems to be directed at expanding ultrafiltered (UF) milk capacity to meet the needs of the high protein beverage and cultured products categories. The current expansion in dairy processing capacity in the state is largely targeting Class I and II products, namely

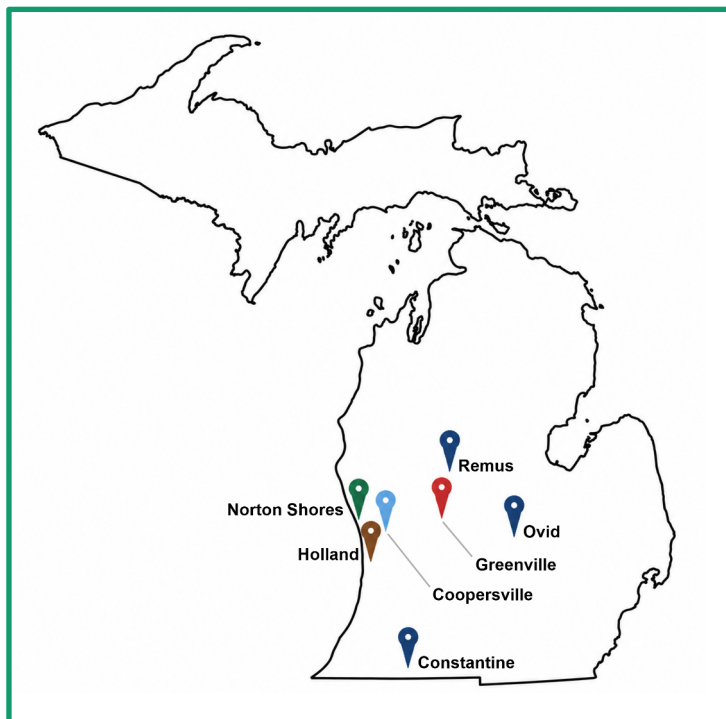


Figure 1. Locations of recent dairy processing investment announcements in Michigan.

high-protein beverage milk, protein shakes, canned dairy based beverages, ice cream, and cottage cheese. The combined value of these ongoing investments is easily over a billion dollars. The expansions also come after years of a steady stream of investment in Michigan dairy, including the opening of the \$58 million Foremost Greenville plant in 2018, specializing in the production of condensed milk and bulk cream, and the \$470 million MWC plant in 2020, specializing in the production of cheese and whey products.

How did this happen?

Given the precipitous rise in Michigan dairy processing capacity over the last decade, it is logical to ask how we got here. Among the factors attracting processors to Michigan is the availability of raw milk. According to data from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), from 2005 to 2025 milk production on Michigan farms rose from 6.8 billion pounds per year to 12.5 billion pounds per year (Figure 2, right).

Michigan ranks 6th nationally in total milk production, trailing neighboring Wisconsin by about 20 billion pounds in 2025. That said, Michigan ranks 1st in the nation for milk produced per cow, highlighting the notable efficiency of Michigan dairies across the national landscape.

How has the industry changed?

Michigan's fluid milk output reflects a nearly 90% increase in milk production over the last 20 years. This is almost double the growth rate of Wisconsin and Indiana and four times the growth rate of Ohio (Figure 3, right). The growth in Michigan's milk production during this period is also reflected in the higher volume of Federal Order 33 (FO33) pooled milk that is sourced from Michigan farms.

FO33, officially known as the Mideast Marketing Area, encompasses large parts of Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, as well as portions of Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. In 2005, Michigan farms supplied about 31% of the total producer milk pooled in FO33. In 2025, that figure grew to 51% of the total producer milk pooled in FO33. During that time, according to FO33 data, the number of

Research drill down

processing: What's behind the trends?

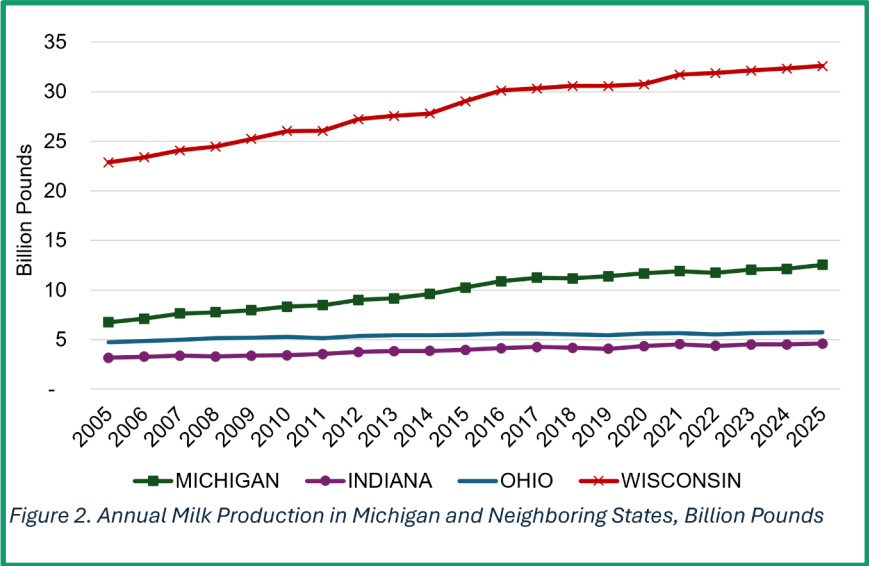


Figure 2. Annual Milk Production in Michigan and Neighboring States, Billion Pounds

Figure 2. Annual milk production in Michigan and neighboring states from 2005 to 2025 in billion pounds.

Michigan dairies contracted nearly 70% from 2,254 dairies in 2005 to 706 dairies in 2025.

The fact that milk production grew in Michigan despite a sharp reduction in the number of dairies is explained by a more than 5-fold increase in the volume of milk per farm from 2005 to 2025. Per FO33 data, the average Michigan dairy produces about 1.2 million pounds of milk per month. For comparison, the average Ohio and Wisconsin dairy produces about 400,000 pounds of milk per month according to data

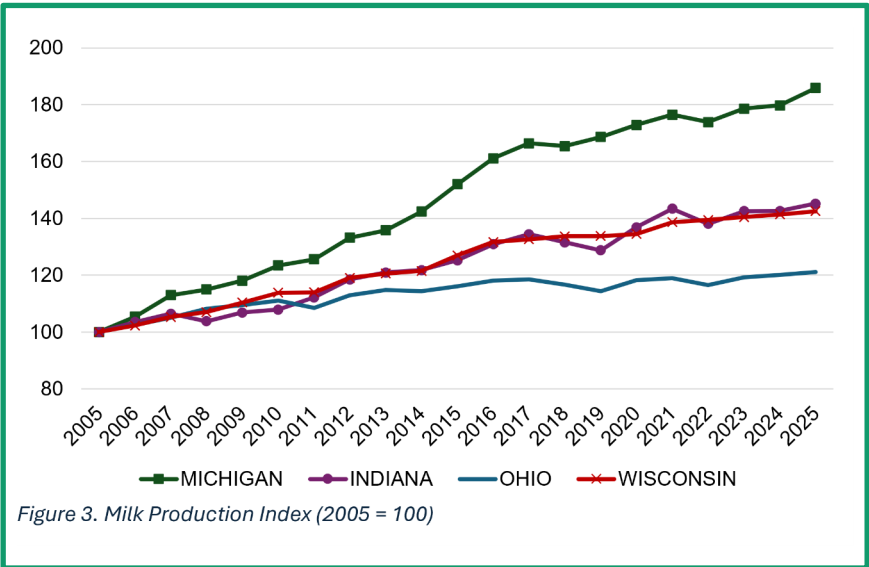


Figure 3. Milk Production Index (2005 = 100)

Figure 2. Annual milk production in Michigan and neighboring states from 2005 to 2025 in billion pounds.

reported by FO33 and FO30, respectively.

The role of milk components

Concurrent to the relative growth in Michigan milk production, milk components have also been on the rise. According to FO33 data, in 2005 as a percentage of total producer milk pounds, butterfat made up 3.84% and protein made up 3.14%. In 2025, that figure grew to 4.50% for butterfat and 3.47% for protein.

This increase in milk components has been partly attributed to advancements in fields such as genetics, nutrition, and cow comfort. The larger dairies, which characterize Michigan relative to neighboring states, are best positioned to benefit from these advancements due to the economies of scale in dairy production.

The same economies of scale that have benefited some Michigan producers have also created an economic landscape where it is more difficult for smaller producers to compete. Historically, the high volume of surplus milk in Michigan has forced milk to travel south to milk deficit regions like Ohio.

Raising milk production without having a local outlet for that milk can therefore cause hauling costs to increase as producers are forced to send their milk out of state. This increase in hauling costs particularly disadvantages smaller producers, who lack the ability of larger producers to spread their higher costs over a greater volume of production.

The increase in the number of larger dairies can also place upward pressure on input prices for smaller dairies, who may have to pay more for feed, land, labor, hauling, and veterinary services as they compete with larger dairies for access.

Research drill down

This is not to completely to the detriment of the small family farm, however, since the growth in Michigan milk production and producer efficiency is attracting new processing capacity into Michigan, which could be beneficial for smaller dairies in a variety of ways.

For one, it has provided existing dairies with marketing outlets that did not exist before. In 2005 “Class II Beverages” was not even a category reported by FO33 on its monthly disposition of receipts by pool handlers report. In 2026, after the opening of the Fairlife plant in Coopersville, “Class II Beverages” makes up the largest single Class II category, accounting for over 80 million pounds of producer milk utilization per month.

Low fat, no fat, whole?

New trends in how dairy is being consumed are also creating opportunities for Michigan producers. From 2010 to 2025, there was a 560 million pound decrease in the amount of fat-free fluid milk that was being packaged and sold in Order 33. During that same period, however, there was an 890 million pound increase in the amount of whole fluid milk that was being packaged and sold in Order 33.

This trend towards whole milk will likely be amplified by the recently signed “Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act”, which permits schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program to offer whole milk to their students. Per the biennial Federal Milk Marketing Order container survey, school milk accounts for about 10% in volume of packaged fluid milk products sold per year.



Figure 4. Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program may now offer whole milk to students. Photo credit: Kristina Blokhin.

The destigmatization of dietary fat has encouraged an increase in demand for dairy butterfat, which as recently as 2024 was regularly exceeding \$3/lb.

Milk protein

Another trend that has been shaking the industry is the surge of consumer interest in high-protein diets beginning in the early 2020s. Whey products, such as whey protein isolate, have featured prominently in this trend with growing demand by retailers and food processors alike, causing record low whey protein inventories.

By 2022, dry whey prices had reached nearly \$0.80/lb. Currently in 2026 dry whey prices are hovering around \$0.65/lb., which translates to an other solids price of around \$0.40/lb. This is double what it was for the entire period from 2010 to 2020 adding about \$1/cwt to a producer's milk check.

The explosive demand for whey has also prompted the opening of new plants and the expansion of existing plants, such as the MWC plant in St. Johns, which produces over 20 million pounds of value-added whey protein powders per year.

Conclusions

The Michigan dairy landscape has shifted dramatically over the last 10 to 20 years. Smaller farms have exited the industry, production and producer efficiency have increased significantly with growth rates outpacing that of neighboring states, supply and demand for milk components have increased, and there has been a surge of investment in expanding processing capacity within the state. While it is too soon to say what the long-term impacts of these shifts will be for remaining Michigan dairies, the industry has proven if anything to be resilient. Moreover, demand for dairy products does not appear to be receding any time soon.

Authors

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Dr. Jaime Luke, Assistant Professor, Department of Agriculture, Food, and Resource Economics

Michigan dairy recognition

Shining a light on industry leaders



Hannah Tucker

Dr. Hannah Tucker is a graduate of Michigan State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in animal science. Originally from Elsie, Michigan, Hannah was active in dairy club and dairy challenge during her time as an undergraduate student.

Raised in the dairy industry, she has built a career focused on ruminant nutrition, lactation physiology, and calf and heifer management. After completing graduate studies at Virginia Tech, Hannah returned to the Lansing area.

As Ruminant Technical Services Manager for North America at NOVUS, she works with dairy producers and research teams to address production challenges, design field and university trials, and translate research into practical applications for the dairy industry.

Photo credit: NOVUS. Article: Hannah Tucker



Bryan and Molly Benson

Benson Dairy Farm is a fifth-generation dairy in Cadillac, Michigan. Established in 1870, Bryan and Molly Benson are carrying their tradition forward with a focus on producing quality milk and building a lasting legacy for their family. They currently milk 490 Holsteins and farm 1,700 acres.

As the 2026 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators, the Benson's will represent MMPA at various industry and association activities. "Our mission for our farm is simple, to provide quality milk while building a legacy for our family. The goals of our farm include streamlining efficiency as well as upgrading our facilities" said the Bensons.

Photo credit: Bryan and Molly Benson. Article: Michigan Milk Producers Association



Jeremy Beebe

Jeremy was recently reappointed as a member of the Michigan Dairy Market Program Committee, which works in collaboration with the United Dairy Industry of Michigan to promote the sale of dairy products. The committee also educates consumers, health professionals, and educators about the dairy industry and the nutritional benefits of Michigan's dairy products.

As the owner of Double B Dairy in Whittemore, Michigan, Jeremy milks cows and farms over 500 acres of corn and hay with his wife Deanna and their six children. In 2018, they were named Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperator runners-up by the Michigan Milk Producers Association.

Photo credit: Michigan Milk Producers Association. Article: State of Michigan

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East Lansing MI 48824

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Extension

Mark your calendar:

- **Dairy Industry Tailgate, East Lansing**
October 17th, 4 hours before kickoff
- **Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock, East Lansing**
Captive bolt training: October 26th
Rollover accident training: October 27th
- **Tri-State Dairy Field Day: Evolving Dairy Cropping Systems, Hickory Corners**
November 10th
- **Dairy Education Academy, East Lansing**
November 13th and 14th
- **Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference, Mt. Pleasant**
February 4th and 5th, 2027

View a complete events listing at canr.msu.edu/dairy/events



Want to connect with your local dairy extension educator? Find them here:

