

Dairy Data Sheet

Chester County, Pennsylvania



Chester County Facts

- There are approximately 280 dairy farms in Chester County. (2007 Ag Census)
- Chester County dairy farms collectively have approximately 18,000 dairy cows. (USDA, NASS 2010).
- The average milk production per cow in Chester County is 21,300 lbs. or 2,477 gallons of whole milk per year. (data from 200 Chester County herds according to Dairy Records Management Systems).
- Total milk production of the estimated 18,000 cows is 383 million lbs. of milk; enough to supply the dairy needs of every resident of Chester County and an additional 140,000 people in nearby counties and states.
- Many Chester County dairy farmers grow their own feed for their dairy cows but they also support local businesses by buying additional feed materials.
- Overall, Chester County dairy farmers have proven to be excellent stewards of the land. Many have taken a proactive role in protecting the natural resources on their farms by having conservation plans and nutrient management plans developed and implemented to improve and protect water quality.

Pennsylvania Facts

- Dairy operations make up the largest sector of Pennsylvania's agricultural industry.
- Pennsylvania is the fifth largest dairy producing state in the U.S. (2009, USDA, NASS)
- Dairy operations generate more than \$4.5 billion for the Pennsylvania economy. (Center for Dairy Excellence).
- Milk from Pennsylvania is shipped to dairy plants up and down the East Coast for bottling and processing.
- Average milk production per cow in Pennsylvania is 20,160 lb. (July 2010 USDA) or 55.23 lbs. or 6.4 gallons of milk per cow per day.

Economic Benefits

- Chester County dairy farms rank fifth in dairy revenue generation in Pennsylvania with a total farm revenue in 2007 of \$68 million, representing 12.3% of the value of total agricultural products sold in the County. (2007 Census of Agriculture)
- Local communities also gain economic benefits from the local dairy farms. For example: each dairy cow generates at least \$13,737 annually for the local economy by requiring feed, farm products, and services such as veterinary, transportation costs, insurance and processing such as bottling/packaging and manufacturing.¹
- An estimated 85% of the money generated is spent within the local community.
- With an average herd size of 84 milking cows a local community may gain approximately \$1,153,908 in revenue.
- The estimated economic impact on Chester County from dairy farming is \$247.3 million.
- Dairy farms generate jobs, in fact one job for every nine cows. Therefore, the dairies in Chester County provide approximately 2,000 employment opportunities.
- Farming not only generates local revenue, but viable farms help maintain areas for groundwater recharge.

¹ Based on \$13,737 economic ripple effect of one cow in the form of jobs, goods, taxes and services in the local communities.



Did You Know...?

- Milk and milk products are essential components of our diet. The 2010 Dietary Guidance Advisory Committee report recommends that people consume more fat-free and low-fat dairy foods such as three servings of milk, yogurt and cheese each day.
- Consumption of milk products in the United States has increased from 564 lbs. per person per year in 1990 to 591 lbs. in 2000 and 600 lbs. in 2008. Of these 600 lbs., 204 lbs. (23.7 gallons of whole milk) are milk and the rest are cheese, butter, yogurt and other dairy products.
- Each day, a lactating dairy cow consumes about 50 lbs. of dry matter in well balanced, nutritious feed and a non-lactating, pregnant dairy cow consumes about 20 lb of dry matter. Typically 50-80% of the feed is forage material.
- Chester County dairy farmers typically grow their own forages, such as baled hay, and fermented feeds, such as corn silage and alfalfa haylage, and some or all of their corn grain and small grains to feed the cows, but have to purchase protein meal and other critical supplements to maintain optimal cow health.
- A cow needs 25-50 gallons of clean water each day.
- Dairy farmers know that cow health, general well-being and comfort are critical components to milk production. They manage facilities to maintain cow comfort throughout the different seasons of the year. Dairy farmers may install fans or misting devices in their cow barns to keep them comfortable during hot summer days.
- Typically milk enters the food supply within three days of being produced.
- All milk is tested multiple times to ensure that no antibiotics or any other harmful residues enter the milk supply.
- Dairy farmers cannot decrease milk production when prices fall below the breakeven level. They must continue to feed the cows, sell the milk and maintain all their facilities and equipment.
- Milk prices are calculated and set each month based on a very complicated formula (USDA). Prices have varied between \$22.00/100 lb in 2008 to just over \$11.00 in 2009. It typically costs between \$15.00 and \$17.00 to produce 100 pounds of milk. During much of 2009 and early 2010 dairy farmers produced milk at a financial loss.
- 99% of dairy farms are family-owned and operated.
- Each year each milking cow normally produces a calf. Typically the farmer raises heifers (female calves) to replace the milking herd as needed or if the dairy herd is being increased. These heifers need to be cared for and fed for two years until they can produce milk. Dairy herds may consist of as many heifers as milking dairy cows.
- Many dairy farmers in Chester County have developed and implemented conservation plans and nutrient management plans to improve and protect water quality.
- Twenty Chester County dairy farmers are participating in the Chester Farms, Nutrient Use Efficiency Program. This program provides farmers with additional tools (pre-sidedress nitrogen testing, corn stalk testing, chlorophyll meters and aerial imagery) that often recommends a reduction in nutrient applications, which in turn reduces the risk of excessive nitrogen entering fresh water aquifers.
- As the production of milk per cow has increased dramatically from 5,314 lb/cow/year in 1950 to 19,576 lbs. in 2006, the amount of methane gas has decreased from 0.0485 lb per lb of milk in 1950 to 0.0169 lb per lb of milk in 2006. As the productivity of the animal has improved, methane (greenhouse gas) emission per unit of milk product is reduced because feed energy associated with maintaining the animal is reduced.

*Produced by the ADC as a result of a collaborative effort by key organizations serving farming in Chester County.
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