

# Start to Farm: New Farmer Learning Network's Dairy Series

## A.S. Leaflet R3147

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### Summary and Implications

Start to Farm: New Farmer Learning Networks are for beginning and early-career farmers looking for an edge in managing and growing their farm business. The ISUEO Dairy Team is providing an opportunity to address ways to improve business practices and production techniques, tour successful farm operations, and form a community to share new ideas and profitable farming methods. The goal of the networks is to provide an open atmosphere for discussion, sharing of ideas and learning about resources for producers who are in their first 10-12 years of dairy farming. It is important to help producers make sound dairy farm management decisions that are backed by current and relevant information.

### Programmatic Response

The ISU Extension and Outreach Team, aided by a grant, is currently engaging approximately 30 prospective, new and beginning dairy producers across the state. Utilizing a technology called ZOOM, participants can attend at one of four locations across the state. The groups are brought together remotely via the internet with the same topics presented at each site. Locations include Dubuque County ISUEO Office in Dubuque, Iowa's Dairy Center in Calmar, Iowa State University Campus in Ames, and Dordt College in Sioux Center. Jenn Bentley, Beth Doran, Hugo Ramirez, and Larry Tranel are the facilitators at each location. Participants are encouraged to attend all or some of the dates, which have included and will include in 2017:

- Nov. 17 - How to Get Started
- Dec. 1 - Cost-Effective Facilities
- Dec. 8 - Feeding the Herd
- Dec. 15 - Crop Nutrient Management
- Jan. 12 – The People Side of Dairy
- Jan. 26 - Raising Calves & Heifers
- Feb. 16 – Herd Health & Records
- March 1 & 2 - Dairy Tours, TBD

The program starts at noon and concludes by 2 p.m. Each session starts with introductions around the state with a roundtable question specific to the topic being presented. Participants receive the presenter's handouts with additional resources for follow-up. All sessions are also videotaped and archived for future participants.

### Result and Discussion

Four sessions have been completed with a pre-post learning evaluation filled out after each session. Scales were 1-10 for each question, with 1 = limited to know knowledge and 10 = expert knowledge. Total scores of all participants for each question (before and after) were tallied, total numerical gain (difference between after vs. before) was calculated, then average absolute gain/ question/ participant was calculated. To date, the sessions have been highly successful in knowledge transfer and stemmed great interests and plans for future opportunities and changes.

November 17th, Managing Dairy Farm Finances -- Tranel	Beg	End	Gain	Ave
20 =n				Gain
1. Understanding the Dairy TRANS Financial Analysis Software	35	107	72	3.60
2. Understanding the Economics of Dairy Farm Systems	78	125	47	2.35
3. Understanding the ISU Extension Dairy Budgets	59	118	59	2.95
4. Understanding the Options for Beginning Dairy Farmers	80	132	52	2.60
5. Understanding How to Analyze Profitability	63	128	64.5	3.23
Has workshop been of high value for you?	Yes	No	% Yes	
	19	0	100%	

December 1st, Facilities -- Bentley, Tranel	Beg	End	Gain	Ave
23 =n				Gain
1. Cost Effective Facilities: Calf to Cow	132	180	47.5	2.07
2. Milking Systems: Low Cost to AMS	110	177	67	3.05
Has workshop been of high value for you?	Yes	No	% Yes	
	21	2	91%	

December 8th, Feeding the Dairy Cow -- Ramirez-Ramirez	Beg	End	Gain	Ave
17 =n				Gain
1. Understanding the Nutrient Requirements of a Dairy Cow	73	120	47	2.76
2. Understanding the Supply of Nutrients from Various Feeds	77	117	40	2.35
3. Evaluation of corn silage quality and management	86	127	41	2.41
4. Understanding different feed additives for dairy cows	71	111	40	2.35
5. Understanding How to evaluate feeding and nutrition	70	112	42	2.47
Has workshop been of high value for you?	Yes	No	% Yes	
	17	0	100%	

December 15th, Managing Soil Nutrients -- Lang	Beg	End	Gain	Ave
15 =n				Gain
1. Understanding the importance of soil sampling	54	98	44	2.93
2. Understanding how and why to send soil samples to certified lab	41	94	53	3.53
3. Reading a soil test and interpreting recommendations	36	88	52	3.47
4. Understanding the Corn N Rate Calculator	38	79	41	2.93
5. Understanding how to take a manure sample	43	89	46	3.29
6. Reading the manure test and calculating recommendations	37	87	50	3.57
Has workshop been of high value for you?	Yes	No	% Yes	
	14	2	88%	

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