

# Stakeholders Report Progress, Honor Pacesetters

**DAVE LEFEVER**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders honored industry pacesetters, reviewed 2003 accomplishments, and outlined goals for 2004 at their breakfast meeting Dec. 11, during the annual two-day conference in Grantville.

President Gary Heckman said the organization grew its membership this year and initiated some new programs. These include a new Dairy Advocacy and Resource Team (DART), a Website (www.padairystake.org), and a milk production record book designed to help producers increase daily production per cow.

Heckman said the aim of the advocacy and resource program is to make 1,000 DART representatives available for the 9,000 dairy farms across the Pennsylvania.

Stakeholders also placed three members on the new Dairy Task Force created by Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff.

More than 90 applications for the Business Planning Assistance Program (BPAP) came in this year. Begun in 1999, BPAP has paid a total of \$62,165 in grants to 47 producers through this past November for strategic business planning.



**Rod Hissong of Mercer Vu Farms, Pacesetter Award winner, says that business planning assistance has played a big role in the success of his family's dairy operation.**

Russ Redding, Pennsylvania deputy secretary of agriculture, spoke to the group about growing options for risk management in the state. About 16,000 Pennsylvania farmers have taken out crop insurance, including what he called a "whole farm program." The policies have resulted in "significant remuneration" to farmers, according to Redding.

"Education is changing producers' behavior," he said.

Redding pointed out the need for Pennsylvania to team with other states in order to leverage U.S. Congress to allow greater risk management tools for agriculture in the future.

The Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders presented two outstanding dairy operations in Pennsylvania with the 2003 Pacesetter Award.

Award recipient Clifford Hawbaker is credited with being the creative engine in the formation of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) in 1994.

"I'm a dreamer," Hawbaker said. "My wife Maggie asks me if I've ever been in a box."

Hawbaker's drive to succeed — and to help his contemporaries in the dairy industry do the same — prompted him to lay the groundwork for PDMP. The organization provides a unique opportunity for progressive producers to interact in an educational and informational way with other producers and agribusiness persons.

"I'm excited about the future of what can happen here in Pennsylvania," Hawbaker said in accepting the award. He pointed out that 50 percent of the U.S. population is within a one-day drive of the state.

"Half the people in the country are at our fingertips," he said.

"The Pennsylvania dairy industry is alive.

Hawbaker and his wife Maggie operate a progressive 410-cow dairy near Chambersburg. Hawbaker's emphasis is not on production awards or top genetics alone, but on profitability and environmental stewardship. His self-designed and somewhat unique manure system is revolutionary in its design and is the foundation for his effective nutrient management model. The farm consists of 300 acres of grassland. Hawbaker contracts other forages from local farmers.

In addition to PDMP, Hawbaker's activities have included the Franklin County Farm Bureau (past president), Franklin County Farmland Preservation, Franklin County Soil Conservation, Mount Joy Farmers Cooperative, and the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders. This year, he joins the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders board of directors.

The Hissongs of Mercer Vu Farms were first presented with the Pacesetter Award in August at the PDMP summer educational meeting at their farm. Their mission is "to produce high quality milk efficiently, safely and profitably as to benefit management, employees, cows, the environment and the community in which we live."



**Clifford Hawbaker accepts the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholder Pacesetter Award for his vision that helped form the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania.**

Ron, Rick, and Rod Hissong are all active in the dairy industry and in their community.

The farm's Website, www.mercervufarms.com, has evolved into a vehicle to keep the public informed and updated on modern agricultural practices. The site even contains information about the positive economic impact the operation has, and will have the in the future, on the community.

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## Holstein USA Approves ID Program

BRATTLEBORO, Vt. — Holstein Association USA, Inc. recently approved the Cattle Identification Database (CID) to identify any breed of cattle, including crossbred animals.

CID will be available for producers late in 2004.

The CID program, under development by Insinc USA, Inc., a subsidiary of Holstein Association USA, Inc., will record lineage and available performance data on crossbred animals. The program offers the convenience of recording every animal in a herd, regardless of breed, and gives producers the ability to meet their identification needs.

"Holstein Association USA would like to obtain information on crossbred animals because most crosses today contain Holstein genetics," said Tom Lawlor, Ph. D., director of research and development, Holstein Association USA, Inc. "We are interested in measuring how other breeds benefit from the Holstein cross because of genetic improvements such as increased production and decreased inbreeding."

The Holstein Association USA, Inc. board of directors approved CID at their November board meeting.

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