

PENNSYLVANIA

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DAIRY ADVISORY TEAMS

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ARE YOU A BENEFICIAL TEAM MEMBER?

Are your team meetings productive? Do they stay on track and focused? It's easy to blame the coordinator for an unproductive team meeting, but perhaps you need to be a better team member. Your role as a team member may not be as complex as the role of the coordinator but is crucial to the success of the team. Keep in mind that the purpose of the team is to help the producer make sound business decisions. Here are some simple tips to help you fulfill your role as a team player.



Ground Rules

- Avoid competing, arguing, and trying "to win."
- Do not limit the team's progress by politeness, i.e. find creative ways to challenge others
- Put producer's interests above your own

Listening

- Hear the problem (by paying attention)
- Do not prejudge and evaluate without fully comprehending the situation

Respect and Trust

- Remember that diversity makes a team stronger and more flexible
- Be responsible & complete assigned tasks

Awareness and Timing

- Involve everyone in discussion and decision making times
- Ask questions and offer information at the appropriate times
- Move from problem identification to a solution, do not get caught in details that are not part of the solution

WORKING WITH NEW TEAM MEMBERS

The addition of new members to an existing team happens quite often. It may be the situation of employee turnover in the industry or a producer switching loyalty to another agribusiness.

The easiest way for a new team member to learn more about the team process is by having a short one-on-one meeting with the coordinator. The coordinator may want to put together a notebook that has the team's objectives, goals, and progress from previous team meetings. Here are some important points to emphasize to the new member:

Purpose of the DAT:

Today's dairy management problems are complex and are beyond the solution of individuals and require multiple skills, experiences, and judgments to solve performance problems. The purpose of our team is to develop new ideas, to set goals and to achieve an optimistic new vision for the dairy business.

Team Members and Roles:

The producer decided who would be on his team. On this particular team, the nutritionist is the coordinator, the veterinarian is an advisor, the accountant is our recorder/communicator, and the extension agent is the timekeeper/advisor. The producer is the decision maker. You may want to explain these roles in depth.

Ground Rules:

Ground rules are specific to each farm. Our ground rules are: Open discussion of ideas, Respect for others, Producer makes decisions and takes ownership of goals, and Information confidentiality.

Goals and Objectives:

Explain the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis that was done at the first team meeting. This particular team has three goals: to increase milk production, reduce work hours, and to improve milk quality. The team has set forth objectives to obtain these goals.

Training Manuals For New Employees



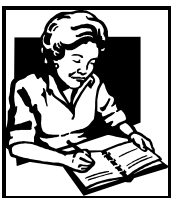
Maintaining productivity levels in the midst of hiring new employees is a challenge. To make a smooth transition into the

position, provide the new hire with a training manual. Training manuals are job descriptions and sets of instructions (or Standard Operating Procedures) that employees use to complete a new job safely and efficiently. Here are some useful tips when writing your manual:

- Tailor the writing to your reader. Consider the age, education, knowledge, skills, training, and work culture of your new hire.
- Write clearly and concisely. Avoid long complicated sentences. Use bullets, a series of steps, or pictures where appropriate. Use action words!
- Be complete. Before using the manual, test it on several workers and ask for feedback
- Use a three ring binder. Add related press articles or additional or updated standard operating procedures. Design the manual to be visually attractive and user friendly (include and table of contents)

AGRIBUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

In May 2000, PSU Dairy Advisory Team staff surveyed agribusiness consultants that participated in teams from 1997-1999. Here is a summary of the 94 consultants who responded:



work.

When consultants were asked, "What is the maximum number of teams that you would want to work with annually," the average was 4 with 32% responding 5 or more while all others wanted fewer herds. The number of herds is probably related to how advisors are paid and recognized for their

When asked, "How far would you be willing to travel to work with a client on a team?" 66% responded 50 or fewer miles.

When asked, "Have you worked with teams outside of the Penn State project?" 42% said yes.

In response to "What is the best herd size for using an advisory team? 30% indicated any size, 16% selected 30 to 80 milking cows, and 17% said 100 plus.

Sixty-three percent selected a team size as 3 to 6 members as the better team size and the most popular expertise needed by advisory teams was finance (94%), nutrition (93%), and health (86%).

When asked how many hours are devoted to teams annually, 22% of coordinators selected 30 to 40 hours while 25% of team members selected 10 to 19 hours.

Hours spent varied by role on the team with coordinators spending an average of 28 hours annually and team members 22 hours. For team advisors working with project herds, 61 % did not charge for their services directly. The average charge by all advisors was \$250 per herd with a range from \$0 to \$3600.

In response to, "Beyond this project, will the level of monetary compensation affect your commitment to a dairy advisory team? 34% said yes and 50% said a paid coordinator would be useful.

Many cooperators received indirect payment for their services by selling feed or lending money to the herd. Veterinarians typically charge an hourly rate for their time. Questions in the survey were not written to document these causal observations.

In response to, "Did working with teams help you to achieve any of your own professional goals? 76% said yes.

The questions, "Was the training session in January adequate for starting teams?" drew 78% approval and "Did the team help you to learn about areas of expertise besides your own? 92% responded favorably. Sixty-one percent said working with teams influenced how they work with clients without teams. Eighty-seven percent were somewhat to very satisfied with achievement of team goals and 90% said they would continue to work with teams.

Thank you consultants who completed the survey. These results help project leaders improve programming and educational materials for future Dairy Advisory Team workshops.

Pass the news along....

- ▶ This fall, Penn State is excited to offer the fifth year of the Dairy Advisory Team Program and is in search of farms wishing to participate. On October 4, 2000, a workshop will be held for all agri-business folks who wish to learn more about the Dairy

Advisory Team concept . The meeting will be from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Toftrees Resort, State College, PA. In the winter, a team kick-off workshop will be held for dairy producers interested in starting a team. If you would like to attend one of these meetings or have a farm to nominate, please call Beth Moore at 717-375-2639.

- ▶ The following resources are available: Dairy Advisory Team informational brochures, October 4th meeting flyers, and “A quick Guide to Effective Team Meetings”

Quotable Quotes:

Are you really listening...or are you just waiting for your turn to talk?

-R. Montgomery

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones

-Chinese Proverb

You can only lead others where you yourself are willing to go

-L. McLean

When we all think alike, no one thinks very much.

-Unknown

Any meeting worth holding is worth planning

-Unknown

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