



Lessons learned from the 2024 Illinois Dairy Summit

On February 7, the University of Illinois and the Illinois Milk Producers Association held the 2024 Illinois Dairy Summit at Highland Community College in Freeport. The theme was “Planning for Uncertain Margins in the Dairy Industry.” Over 70 people registered for the conference, and we had good discussions during the producers’ panel. The proceedings booklet from the event [is available on our website](#). I have selected a few take-home messages from the summit to share with you.

I had the opportunity to share new information about amino acid nutrition in dairy cattle. We have been working on feeding rumen-protected methionine and rumen-protected lysine to dairy cows during the close-up period. One thing that seems clear is that feeding the grams of amino acids associated with dietary energy will depend on the energetic value of the close-up diet. In a controlled-energy diet (straw diet), the energy is lower than that without straw. Therefore, we believe a fixed amount of ~35 grams of metabolizable methionine and ~95 grams of metabolizable lysine should be the target for improved performance.

Ben Buckner from AgResource gave a very comprehensive talk about the commodities scenario (Figure 1). He explained that class III milk is no longer a reliable indicator for farm prices. He also demonstrated that US products are competitively priced.

Dr. Nolan highlighted the importance of evaluating records as a very important factor for farmers to be competitive in 2024. He advised farmers to take the time to get the most from their cows and said that culling is not always an economic decision. Spending time and resources to get your cows to the payoff point is essential.

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Dan Schneider and Brent Pollard did a fantastic job highlighting the absence of a “magic pill” to be competitive in times of low milk prices. Low employee turnover and avoiding being too leveraged with loans kept their farms afloat through low milk prices. They recommended experimenting with procedures on a small scale before making a commitment for the whole farm.

I hope you find this information helpful, and feel free to reach out if you have any questions. I would like to thank Dan and Brent for sharing their farms’ data during the producer panel. Thank you to all who attended and participated in the 2024 Illinois Dairy Summit.

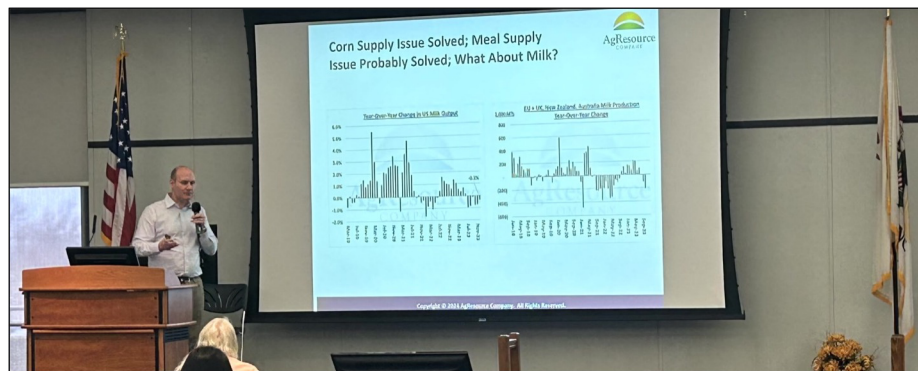


Figure 1. Ben Buckner speaking about milk supply during the 2024 IL Dairy Summit.

—*Dr. Phil Cardoso*
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