



Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference

February 5-6, 2026

**Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan**



Additional Information Available At:
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Session Presentations Available at:
<https://www.glrdc.org/proceedings-2026/>
Password: GLRDC26Milk!





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2026 Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference Schedule at a Glance

See pages 8 & 9 for a map of the Entertainment Hall and Conference Center

Thursday, February 5, 2026

9 a.m.	Registration Opens	Entertainment Hall
9:30 a.m.	Exhibitor Showcase Begins	Entertainment Hall
9:45 a.m.	Program Welcome & United Dairy Industry of Michigan Update	Main Stage
10:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions: High Oleic Soybeans for Dairy: Enhancing Efficiency and Sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Adam Lock, Michigan State University</i>• <i>Nathan Brandt, Four Cubs Farm</i>• <i>Nate Elzinga, Caledonia Farmers Elevator</i>• <i>Brian Preston, Preston Farms</i>• <i>Emcee: Alycia Bales, Caledonia Farmers Elevator</i>	Breakout 1 <i>0.5 RACE credits</i>
	From Dry to Fresh: Using Tech to Nail the Transition <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Claira Seely, University of New Hampshire</i>	Breakout 2 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Latest Research at MSU and MSU Dairy Update <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Barry Bradford, Michigan State University</i>• <i>Martin Mangual, Michigan State University Extension</i>• <i>Lynn Olthof, Michigan State University, Grad Student</i>	Breakout 3 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
11:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions: <i>Repeat Breakout sessions from 10:30 a.m.</i>	Breakouts 1, 2, & 3
12:30 p.m.	Lunch and Networking	Entertainment Hall
1:30 p.m.	Keynote: Growing Pains: Navigating the Dairy Markets Amid Industry Expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Sarina Sharp, Daily Dairy Report</i>	Main Stage
2:30 p.m.	Break and Sponsor Networking	Entertainment Hall
3:00 p.m.	Breakout Sessions: Feeding the Herd: Crop Outlook and Its Impact on Dairy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Matt Tranel, Ever.Ag</i>	Breakout 1
	Health Hooves, Healthy Herds: Advancing the Prevention and Control of Claw Diseases in Dairy Cattle <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Dörte Döpfer, University of Wisconsin - Madison</i>	Breakout 2 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	The Big Shift: Moving Milk to New Dairy Processors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Sarina Sharp, Daily Dairy Report</i>	Breakout 3
	Shaping the Future of Your Farm: Insights on Infrastructure and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Emcee: Casey Mickelson, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions</i>• <i>Rudolph DeJong, Mayflower Dairy</i>• <i>Aubrey Lettinga, Walnutdale Family Farms, LLC</i>• <i>Keith Sikkema, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions</i>• <i>Bob Woronko, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions</i>	Breakout 4

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Thursday, February 5, 2026 cont.

3:50 p.m.	Break and Sponsor Networking	Entertainment Hall
4:05 p.m.	Breakout Sessions:	
	Feeding the Herd: Crop Outlook and Its Impact on Dairy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Matt Tranel, Ever.Ag</i>	Breakout 1
	Securing the Workforce: TN Visas and Other Labor Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Ryan Lamb, Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC</i>	Breakout 2
	Capitalizing on Opportunities with Milking Robots <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Trevor DeVries, University of Guelph</i>	Breakout 3 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Shaping the Future of Your Farm: Insights on Infrastructure and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Emcee: Casey Mickelson, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions</i>• <i>Rudolph DeJong, Mayflower Dairy</i>• <i>Aubrey Lettinga, Walnutdale Family Farms, LLC</i>• <i>Keith Sikkema, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions</i>• <i>Bob Woronko, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions</i>	Breakout 4
5:10 p.m.	Breakout Sessions:	
	The Big Shift: Moving Milk to New Dairy Processors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Sarina Sharp, Daily Dairy Report</i>	Breakout 1
	Securing the Workforce: TN Visas and Other Labor Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Ryan Lamb, Foster Swift Collins & Smith P</i>	Breakout 2
	Capitalizing on Opportunities with Milking Robots <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Trevor DeVries, University of Guelph</i>	Breakout 3 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Health Hooves, Healthy Herds: Advancing the Prevention and Control of Claw Diseases in Dairy Cattle <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Dörte Döpfer, University of Wisconsin - Madison</i>	Breakout 4 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
5:00 p.m.	GreenStone Farm Credit Services Reception	Saginaw Ballroom
5:45 p.m.	General Reception	Entertainment Hall



2026 Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference Schedule at a Glance

See pages 8 & 9 for a map of the Entertainment Hall and Conference Center

Friday, February 6, 2026

7:30 a.m.	Registration & Exhibitor Showcase Open	Entertainment Hall
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Entertainment Hall
8:30 a.m.	From Great Plains to Michigan: Translating Dairy Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Greg Bethard, High Plains Ponderosa Dairy</i>	Main Stage
9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions: Cool Cows, Better Performance: Tackling Heat Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Geoff Dahl, University of Florida</i>	Breakout 1 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Optimizing Dairy Forages: Proven Strategies for Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Isaac Salfer, University of Minnesota</i>	Breakout 2 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Reproduction Success Through Automation: Tools for Today's Dairy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Julio Giordano, Cornell University</i>	Breakout 3 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
10:20 a.m.	Break and Sponsor Networking	Entertainment Hall
10:50 a.m.	Breakout Sessions: Cool Cows, Better Performance: Tackling Heat Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Geoff Dahl, University of Florida</i>	Breakout 1 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Creating Teams for Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Jason Reid, IBA Inc.</i>	Breakout 2
	Move In, Move Out; What's Best for Fresh Cows? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Barry Bradford, Michigan State University</i>	Breakout 3 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
11:40 a.m.	Break and Sponsor Networking	Entertainment Hall
11:55 a.m.	Breakout Sessions: Optimizing Dairy Forages: Proven Strategies for Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Isaac Salfer, University of Minnesota</i>	Breakout 1 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
	Creating Teams for Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Jason Reid, IBA Inc.</i>	Breakout 2
	Reproduction Success Through Automation: Tools for Today's Dairy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Julio Giordano, Cornell University</i>	Breakout 3 <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
12:45 p.m.	Lunch and Networking	Entertainment Hall
1:45 p.m.	Closing Keynote: The Bottom Line: Unlocking Dairy Profitability <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dr. Mike Hutjens, University of Illinois - Urbana</i>	Main Stage <i>1.0 RACE credit</i>
2:45 p.m.	Conference Concludes	Entertainment Hall



Friday, February 6, 2026 - Spanish Herdsperson Sessions

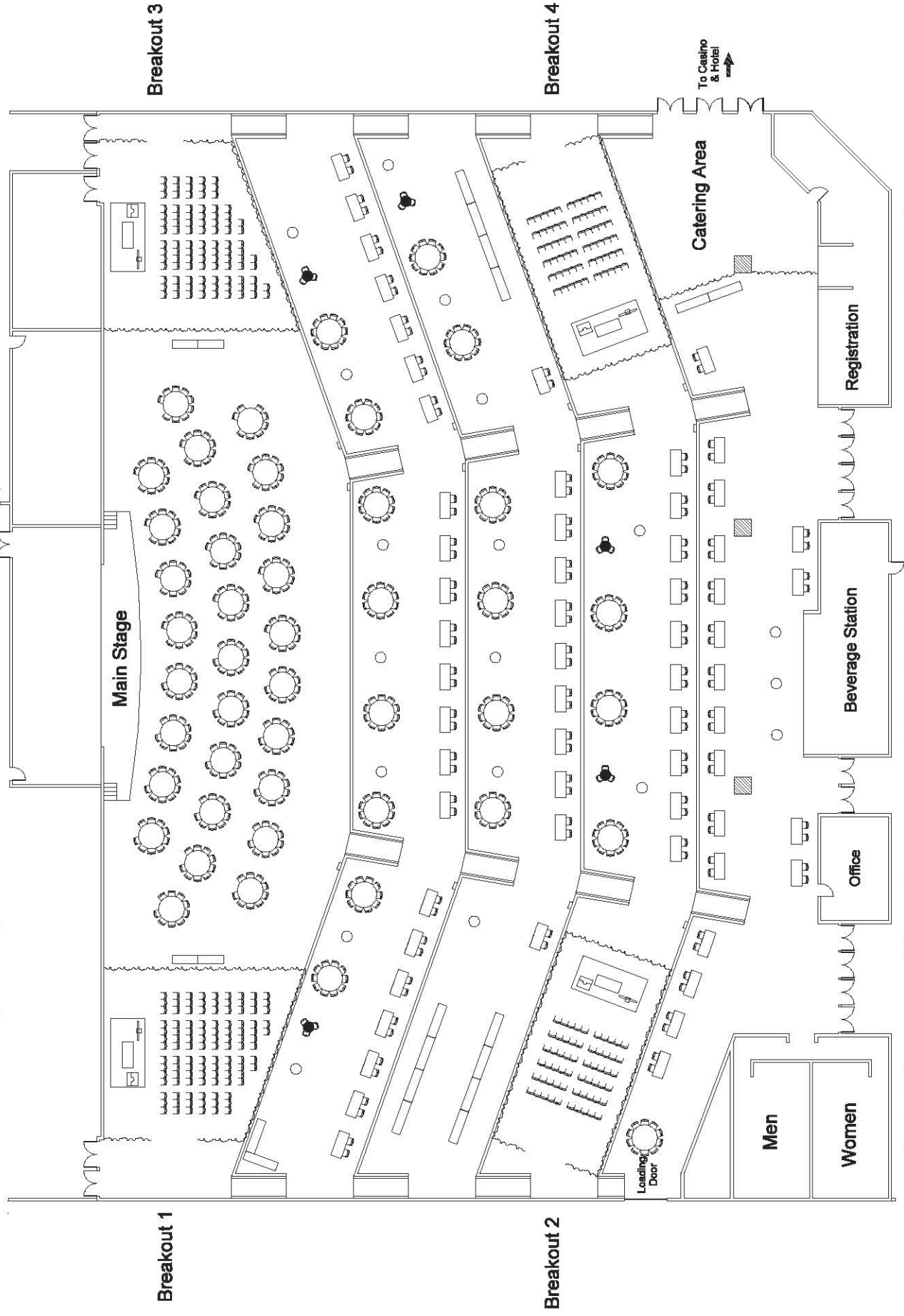
9:30 a.m.	Trabajando en Equipo con el Hato: Cómo Ser un Buen Líder en el Rancho <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Jason Reid, IBA Inc3</i>	Tres Fuegos
10:50 a.m.	Reproducción Bien Hecha: Capacitación Esencial para Encargados del Hato Lechero <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Julio Giordano, Cornell University</i>	Tres Fuegos
11:55 a.m.	Cómo Manejar Vacas y Terneros: Lo Que Todo Ganadero Debe Saber <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Dr. Angel Abuelo, Michigan State University</i>• <i>Dr. Paola Bacigalupo Sanguesa, Michigan State University Extension</i>	Tres Fuegos
1:00 p.m.	Comida y establecimiento de contactos	Entertainment Hall
2:00 p.m.	La conferencia termina	Entertainment Hall

Notes:



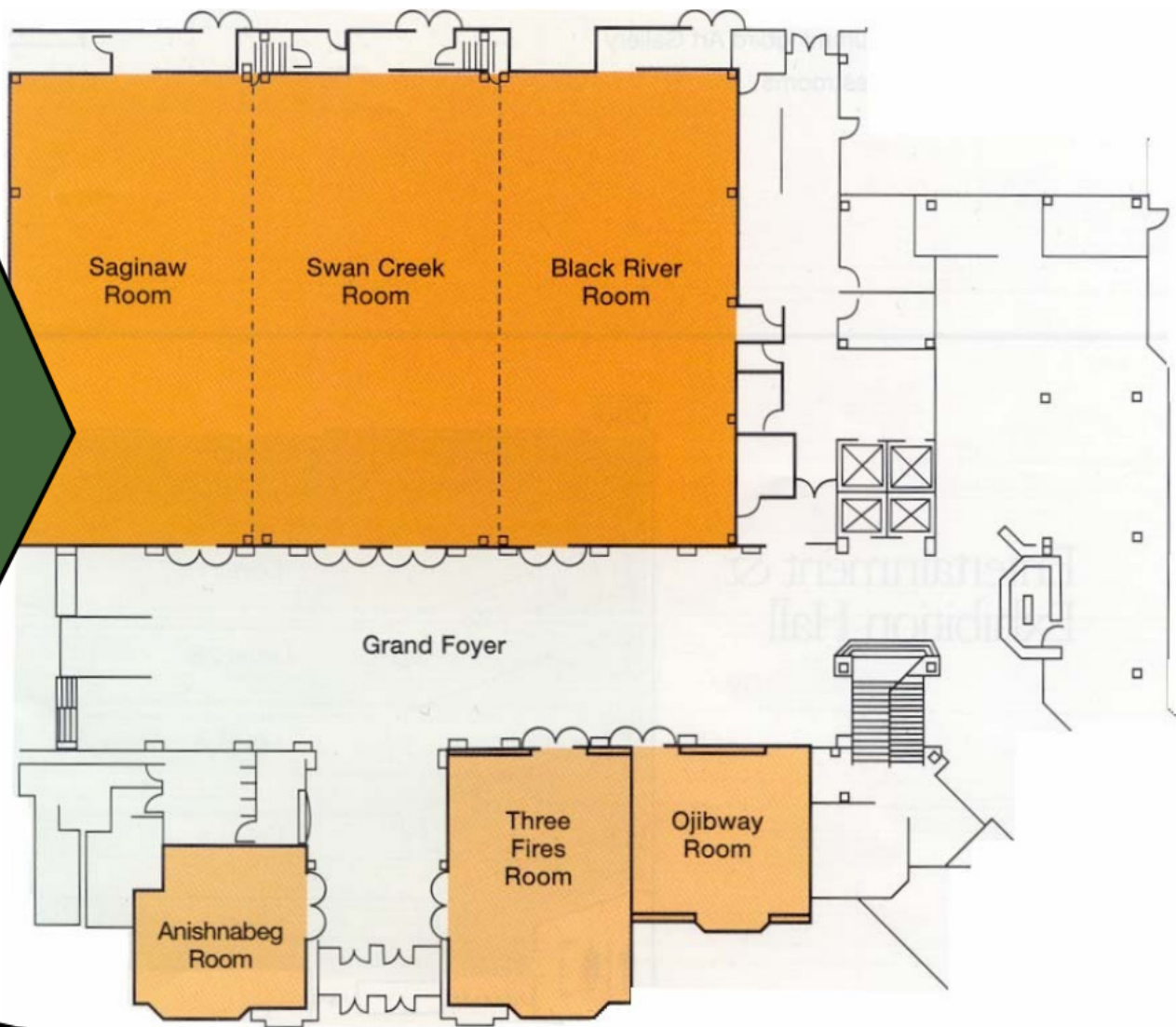
2026 Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference

Soaring Eagle Hotel & Casino • Entertainment Hall



2026 Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference

Conference Layout



February 5, 2026 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
GreenStone Farm Credit Services
Networking Reception



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 10:30 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 1:

High Oleic Soybeans for Dairy: Enhancing Efficiency and Sustainability

Adam's current research with high oleic soybeans builds on over a decade of research in exploring how dietary fatty acids influence milk composition, cow health, and farm economics. While oleic acid has been studied in other contexts, recent efforts by the lab are the first sustained research in Michigan or elsewhere showing the potential dual benefit of high oleic soybeans for feed cost reduction and milk component enhancement. In this presentation we will summarize recent research with high oleic soybeans and highlight how the success of this work is rooted in collaboration—with producers, nutritionists, and academics; it's a great example of how land-grant research can drive real change on the ground.

Dr. Adam Lock, Michigan State University

Dr. Adam L. Lock grew up on a dairy farm in southwest United Kingdom and attended the University of Nottingham, receiving a PhD in ruminant nutrition. He also completed post-doctorates at the University of Nottingham and Cornell University. From 2006 – 2009, Lock researched and taught at the University of Vermont before moving to MSU. Lock's programs focus on fatty acid digestion and metabolism in the dairy cow and the impact of bioactive fatty acids on both animal production and human health. Through his research program, the Lock Lipid Lab, many research trials and published journal articles were conducted to expand the knowledge of using fatty acid supplements and oilseeds to enhance fatty acid absorption in the small intestine, maximize milk fat synthesis through varying dietary strategies, and how individual fatty acids impact the metabolism of the dairy cow. These research findings help to improve the ability to troubleshoot on farm issues related to milk fat depression, low butterfat tests, and opportunities related to fat supplementation. Recently, Lock's team has focused on the use of high oleic acid soybeans to improve milk production in high-producing dairy cows, which has been extremely beneficial to the Michigan dairy industry.



Nathan Brandt, Four Cubs Farm

Nathan Brandt has been the Dairy Herd Manager at Four Cubs Farm in Grantsburg, WI since 2014. The dairy currently milks 975 cows with 16 Lely A4 Robots. Retrofitting the barn and installing the robots following a devastating parlor fire in the fall of 2017. Navigating the rebuild and transition to robotic milking brought valuable lessons in budgeting, innovation, and resilience – skills Nathan continues to apply today.

Four Cubs Farm has fed Roasted Hi-Oleic soybeans since the fall of 2022. Since then, the farm has invested in on-farm roasting and grain storage. The team at Four Cubs Farm has tested different bean roasting techniques and fat supplementation approaches to enhance herd performance and operational efficiency.

Nathan earned a bachelor's degree in Animal Science with a minor in Food Science from UW – River Falls, where he started in the dairy industry in an internship with GENEX. Utilizing his beef background, he co-founded Brickfield Market in 2022, a venture that sells beef from crossbred steers raised on the farm and features their meat in a food truck. Nathan and his wife Elisabeth have two young kids, and he enjoys coaching them in sports and getting them involved in life on the farm.

Nate Elzinga, Caledonia Farmers Elevator

Nathan Elzinga grew up on a dairy farm, graduated from the dairy management program from MSU, then returned home to manage the family’s dairy alongside his wife, Jenny, and their 5 kids. Before selling the farm in 2018, Elzinga and Jenny were named the 2017 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators from MMPA. Elzinga did his own nutrition work on the family farm, so, after the farm sold, Elzinga joined the feed team at CFE as a Ruminant Nutritionist.



Elzinga’s knowledge of nutrition and experience as a dairy farmer helped him form a successful career of feeding dairy cows across Michigan. Additionally, he works with Michigan Dairy Tech, helping producers to understand their milking software and technology. Outside of work, Elzinga has been a part of the MSU Internal Dairy Challenge program, guiding students in all aspects of dairy.

With the boom of high oleic soybeans hitting, Elzinga helped formulate the diets for the MSU trials utilizing high oleic soybeans. He also has been successful in feeding both roasted and ground high oleic soybeans and the high oleic soybean expeller meal. Elzinga has been an integral part of helping some producers set up their own on farm roaster and grinder to make sure those producers get the most out of their soybeans.



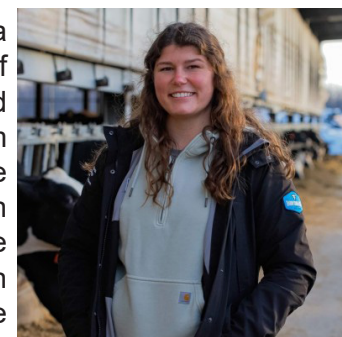
Brian Preston, Preston Farms

Brian Preston is a 4th generation dairy farmer, operating alongside his father, uncle, and cousin. Preston Farms milks 1,000 head of dairy cows and utilizes ~1,600 acres to grow corn, alfalfa, and high-oleic soybeans. Additionally, the family raises 4,000 head of contract hogs. Preston earned his bachelor’s degree in agribusiness management from MSU. He has served on several different committees, such as the MMPA board of directors, the American Farm Bureau Federation’s dairy working group, and the Michigan Farm Bureau’s Young Farmer State Committee.

Preston and his family took a leap and planted high oleic soybean in 2024. After investing in a used roaster and grinder, the farm began feeding the high oleic soybeans later that year and saw a large bump in milk fat. They have had continued success with feeding the high oleic soybeans since and Preston has been able to speak about the farm’s cost savings and milk production gains to several outlets, helping to spread the word on high oleic soybeans in Michigan. Recently, Preston Dairy invested in a new setup with a Dilts-Wetzel electric roaster and hammer mill to meet capacity for a higher level feeding rate of the high oleic soybeans.

Alycia Bales, Caledonia Farmers Elevator (EMCEE)

Dr. Alycia Bales is the Animal Nutrition Technical Support representative for Caledonia Farmers Elevator (CFE) located in Caledonia, Michigan. She works with a team of ruminant nutritionists where she helps to be a bridge between applied research and on-farm practical solutions. Alycia received her B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees from Michigan State University where her graduate work concentrated on dairy cattle nutrition with a focus on fatty acid supplementation. During her Ph.D., Alycia ran several studies that investigated the utilization of high oleic acid soybeans and the impact of this soybean on milk production responses. Since joining the CFE team in the Spring of 2024, she has been part of the effort to help dairy producers adopt the idea of including high oleic soybeans into dairy rations.





Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 10:30 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 2:

From Dry to Fresh: Using Tech to Nail the Transition

In this session we will explore available precision technologies within the dairy industry, touching on the pros and cons as well as utility of certain technologies in differing dairy systems. We will discuss the data recorded by these technologies and how it and associated alerts can be interpreted and utilized in the field, especially as it relates to transition cows. We will diver deeper into research studies exploring the utility of precision technology data to predict and identify cows at risk of or currently experiencing transition cow disorders. Through this review of past and on-going research studies, we will touch on how producers can incorporate these findings into their individual herd health protocols.

Dr. Clair Seely, University of New Hampshire

Dr. Clair Seely obtained her PhD from Cornell University under the guidance of Dr. Jessica McArt. Dr. Seely's graduate studies were centered on the epidemiology of subclinical hypocalcemia in dairy cattle, treatment and prevention of the disease, as well as mechanisms of Calcium homeostasis in the early lactation dairy cow. During her graduate studies, Dr. Seely also incorporated precision technology to assist in the identification of early lactation cows with subclinical disorders. This interest led her to the University of New Hampshire where she joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor in the department of Agriculture, Nutrition, and Food Systems in December 2023. Research in Dr. Seely's lab is focused on the integration of dairy cow biology and precision dairy technologies. With a specific emphasis on epidemiological methods, her research aims to deepen our understanding of the biology of the transition cow while optimizing and validating technologies that will improve dairy cattle health, well-being, and productivity.



Notes:

Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 10:30 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 3: MSU Dairy Update

This presentation will feature updates on the new MSU dairy facility and highlight a new program that helps farms answer their management questions. The Evidence-Based Dairy Management Program (EBDM) is a collaborative program designed to connect dairy producers with support to ask and answer questions on their own operation. Dr. Bradford will speak of the benefits of using this program.



Dr. Barry Bradford, Michigan State University

Bradford completed dual bachelor's degrees at Iowa State University and a doctorate in animal nutrition at Michigan State University. He served on the faculty at Kansas State University from 2006 to 2019, and in 2020 he returned to Michigan State as the Clint Meadows Chair in Dairy Management. Bradford's research focuses on dairy cattle nutrition and metabolism, including dietary utilization of byproducts in lactation diets, the physiological impacts of inflammation after calving, and the roles of nutrients as signals. In his current role, Bradford carries out research and works directly with dairy producers to find solutions to dairy management challenges.



A New Tool for Planning Dairy Farm Expansions

This presentation will demonstrate how to utilize and interpret results from a new dairy farm expansion tool that evaluates profitability, cash flow, equity, and financial ratios of multiple expansion scenarios to determine which best achieves a farm's economic goals. The online tool is tailored to individual farm situations and is available on the MSU Extension website.

Lynn Olthof, Michigan State University

Lynn Olthof is a PhD candidate under Dr. Barry Bradford studying dairy management at Michigan State University. Lynn grew up on her grandparents' pasture dairy in West Michigan and went to MSU in 2017 to obtain an Institute of Agricultural Technology (IAT)

Dairy Management Certificate, a bachelor's degree in Agribusiness Management, and a master's degree in animal science. Lynn was a member of the MSU dairy judging team and a national championship dairy challenge team. As a graduate student, Lynn teaches dairy courses, coaches the dairy judging team, coordinates the MSU Dairy Education Academy, and researches economic implications of dairy farm management decisions.

The Value of a Worker Development Program

This presentation focuses on the role of workforce training and its importance for farm improvement and consistency. It will outline current MSU Extension dairy worker training programs, and how these have impacted dairy operations, along with practical insights into what makes training programs effective and effective for dairy employees.



Martin Mangual, Michigan State University Extension

Martin J. Carrasquillo-Mangual, M.S., P.A.S., is a Dairy Educator with MSU Extension, spending eight years supporting dairy farms across Michigan. His work blends research-based science with practical, on-farm experience. With a focus on workforce education, he supports dairy employees by increasing skills and developing materials for producers on herd management, feeding strategies, and overall farm efficiency. Originally from Puerto Rico, Carrasquillo-Mangual grew up on his family's farm. He earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Puerto Rico-Cayey and a master's in animal science, with a concentration in dairy nutrition, from Michigan State University. He has presented at state and national conferences and is committed to providing accurate, accessible information to farmers, empowering both businesses and workforces to thrive.



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 1:30 p.m.

Keynote Address - Main Stage:

Growing Pains: Navigating the Dairy Markets Amid Industry Expansion

The U.S. dairy herd hasn't been this large since the early '90s, in the days of grunge, jellies, and Boyz II Men. And today's cows are making a lot more milk than their forebears, supercharged with record-setting components. All that milk is weighing on the prices of cheese, butter, and dairy producers' milk checks. How long will cow numbers stay high? Will beef revenues and inexpensive feed be enough to keep producers in the black? Join veteran industry analyst Sarina Sharp as she explores the fundamentals that determine your bottom line.



Sarina Sharp, Daily Dairy Report

Sarina Sharp was raised on a dairy farm in West Michigan. She graduated with honors from Covenant College, with a degree in Finance and an English minor. She worked for two years as a grain market analyst at the Nesvick Trading Group in Memphis, Tennessee. For the past 10 years, she has been studying the commodity markets and managing financial risk for dairies in the Great Lakes region. She also writes regularly about the dairy markets for the Daily Dairy Report and the Milk Producers Council of California. She lives outside Grand Rapids with her husband and three children.

Notes:

Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 3:00 p.m. & 4:05 p.m.

Breakout Session - Room 1

Feeding the Herd: Crop Outlook and Its Impact on Dairy

Matt Tranel brings a unique perspective grounded in real-world dairy experience: he grew up on his family's dairy farm in southwest Wisconsin, and now works as a broker/analyst for Ever.Ag, where he helps dairy, grain and livestock producers craft marketing plans and margin-management programs. This session will leverage Matt's market-intelligence background to explore the latest crop outlook and how those trends ripple through dairy operations. Attendees will gain actionable insight into feed-crop markets and strategies to stretch feed and input dollars — even when markets are volatile or supply is tight.

Matt Tranel, Ever.Ag

Matt grew up on his family's dairy farm in southwest Wisconsin. His farming background led him to the University of Wisconsin – Platteville where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with a minor in Accounting. An Ag Commodity Marketing class peaked Matt's interest in college and led him to a local brokerage company. To this day Matt continues to assist on his family's farm wherever needed. Matt began his career with Commodity Risk Management Group (CRMG) in January of 2015. CRMG later merged and became Ever.Ag. His responsibilities include constructing marketing plans and margin management programs for dairy, grain, and livestock production and processing clients.



Notes:



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 3:00 p.m. & 5:10 p.m.

Breakout Session - Room 2 (3:00 p.m.) & Room 4 (5:10 p.m.)

Healthy Hooves, Healthy Herds: Advancing the Prevention and Control of Claw Diseases in Dairy Cattle

Dr. Dörte Döpfer MSc, PhD, School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin will talk about risk factors, early detection and onset of infectious claw diseases (especially DD), and develop effective prevention and control strategies across the herd with special focus on chronicity of infectious claw diseases in dairy cattle. Machine learning and computer vision enhanced tools using Artificial Intelligence should be robust enough to withstand on-farm conditions and deliver the information that support decision making processes in real-time without jeopardizing data security on-farm. Everything else is just 'a model in an expensive box'.



Dr. Dörte Döpfer, University of Wisconsin - Madison

A veterinarian, epidemiologist and microbiologist by training, Dörte Döpfer is a professor in the Department of Medical Sciences, Food Animal Production Medicine Section of the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

She works on large data sets about infectious disease dynamics, food safety, and emergence of antimicrobial resistance factors. In addition, lameness, particularly Bovine digital dermatitis, prediction models for rare events, machine learning for One Health and farm animal production medicine, computer vision models, and disease surveillance are part of her research projects. She teaches Applied Epidemiology and Artificial Intelligence for DVMs and Life Scientists.

Notes:

Session Sponsor:



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 3:00 p.m. & 5:10 p.m.

Breakout Session - Room 3 (3:00 p.m.) & Room 1 (5:10 p.m.)

The Big Shift: Moving Milk to New Dairy Processors

The U.S. dairy industry has added a lot of new dairy processing in recent years, with more plants preparing to open in 2026. Does the industry have the milk to supply all these new facilities? What will this mean for the dairy product mix and regional milk premiums? Sarina Sharp will walk through the rapidly-shifting dairy processing landscape in this exciting breakout session.



Sarina Sharp, Daily Dairy Report

Sarina Sharp was raised on a dairy farm in West Michigan. She graduated with honors from Covenant College, with a degree in Finance and an English minor. She worked for two years as a grain market analyst at the Nesvick Trading Group in Memphis, Tennessee. For the past 10 years, she has been studying the commodity markets and managing financial risk for dairies in the Great Lakes region. She also writes regularly about the dairy markets for the Daily Dairy Report and the Milk Producers Council of California. She lives outside Grand Rapids with her husband and three children.

Notes:



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 3:00 p.m. & 4:05 p.m.

Breakout Session - Room 4

Shaping the Future of Your Farm: Insights on Infrastructure & Innovation

In this session, prepare to gain valuable insights into the future of your farm's physical development—whether you're renovating existing structures or planning new builds. This session features a panel of building and equipment experts, alongside experienced farm operators, to discuss the latest trends, benefits, and practical considerations in modern farm infrastructure.



Casey Mickelson, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions

Casey Mickelson is an Ag Specialist at SE Agricultural and Commercial Solutions, supporting producers with equipment, project coordination, and practical farm solutions designed to improve efficiency and performance. His background in Facilities, Operations, MSU education and his own small beef operation, he is excited to be in this role to work with his local farmers.

Keith Sikkema, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions

With over a decade of hands-on experience in the agricultural sector, Keith has worked closely with farms to improve operations, refine manure management systems, enhance dairy efficiencies, and support building projects. In 2018, Keith and Bob took ownership of Sikkema Equipment, rebranding it as SE Agricultural and Commercial Solutions while continuing to provide trusted expertise and guidance.



Bob Woronko, SE Agricultural & Commercial Solutions

Bob's extensive background in construction opened the door for Sikkema Equipment to deliver more than equipment to Michigan dairy farms, offering complete project support from facility layouts to building construction. Taking over ownership as CEO in 2018, he helped establish SE Agricultural and Commercial Solutions with a clear mission: enabling customer success through comprehensive, end-to-end solutions.

Rudy DeJong, Mayflower Dairy

Rudy DeJong is a key leader at Mayflower Dairy. With a strong background in dairy farming and farm management, Rudy is committed to maintaining high standards in animal care, operational efficiency, and Innovation. Through dedicated leadership and a practical approach to decision-making, Rudy helps guide Mayflower Dairy's continued success while supporting innovation and best practices within the dairy industry.





Aubrey Lettinga, Walnutdale Family Farms

Aubrey Lettinga plays a key leadership role at Walnutdale Farms, bringing hands-on agricultural experience and a strong commitment to progressive dairy and farm management practices. With a focus on operational efficiency, herd health, and long-term sustainability, Aubrey works closely with the Walnutdale team to continually improve farm systems and outcomes. Known for a practical, solutions-driven approach, Aubrey is dedicated to advancing the farm's success while supporting innovation within the agricultural community.

Notes:

Session Sponsor:



AGRICULTURAL
& COMMERCIAL
SOLUTIONS



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 4:05 p.m. & 5:10 p.m.

Breakout Session - Room 2

Securing the Workforce: TN Visas and Other Labor Strategies

Ryan Lamb of Foster Swift presents a practical session for dairy owners and managers on navigating labor policy to build and retain a safe, legal, and reliable workforce. The session covers strategies for working with hiring firms, understanding TN visa opportunities, and implementing policies that help employees stay compliant and productive while keeping the farm running smoothly.

Ryan Lamb, Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC

Ryan Lamb advises and represents domestic and foreign clients in both business and personal immigration matters, providing services to domestic businesses, employers of foreign national employees, executives, institutions of higher education and individuals. Ryan chairs Foster Swift's Immigration Group, working to continuously improve the representation and delivery of immigration services to our clients. Ryan is a prolific author and invited speaker on numerous immigration topics.



Notes:

Session Sponsor:

FOSTER SWIFT
FOSTER SWIFT COLLINS & SMITH PC | ATTORNEYS

Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 4:05 p.m. & 5:10 p.m.

Breakout Session - Room 3

Capitalizing on Opportunities with Milking Robots

This presentation will focus on capitalizing on the opportunities we have with the use of automated (robotic) milking systems (AMS). Specific focus will be on how we can optimize efficiency of use of those systems, both for the cow and the producer. By understanding how housing, management, and nutrition affect dairy cow behavior in AMS, we can use that knowledge to improve production, health, and efficiency, ultimately leading to greater economic returns.

Dr. Trevor DeVries, University of Guelph

Dr. Trevor DeVries is a Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Department of Animal Biosciences at the University of Guelph. Trevor received his B.Sc. in Agriculture from The University of British Columbia (UBC) in 2001. Immediately following he began graduate studies at UBC, where he received his Ph.D. in 2006. Following that, he spent one year as a post-doctoral fellow with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. In 2007 he was appointed as faculty with the University of Guelph in the Department of Animal Biosciences. In that position Trevor leads a highly productive research program and has published over 175 peer-reviewed papers focused on dairy cattle nutrition, management, behavior, and welfare. He is also committed to extending that work to the field, as evidenced by over 270 invited research presentations. Trevor also contributes to teaching at the university, including instructing undergraduate and graduate courses in the areas of dairy cattle management, behavior, and welfare, coaching the university Dairy Challenge team, as well as mentoring of graduate and undergraduate students. Trevor also works diligently in public service, serving on several university, local, national and international professional committees.



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Thursday, February 5, 2026

5 - 6:30 p.m.

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Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Friday, February 6, 2026 — 8:30 a.m.

Keynote Address - Main Stage

From Great Plains to Michigan: Translating Dairy Success

Dairying is a business, no matter where on the globe you happen to do it. Each region of the US has advantages and disadvantages that make it a suitable or in some cases a desirable place to milk cows. The dairy industry in the Midwest is very different from the Great Plains, but the fundamentals of business are no different. Each dairy should seek to develop an economic model that suits their geography and milk market. The dairy industry is ripe with opportunities and full of engaged individuals harvesting those opportunities. Many models are successful and some models fail. This session will delve into those models and what drives business success.

Dr. Greg Bethard, High Plains Ponderosa Dairy

Greg Bethard grew up in New Jersey USA and developed a passion for agriculture at a young age. He received his BS, MS, and Ph.D. degrees from Virginia Tech in dairy nutrition and management and has spent his entire career in the dairy industry.

He has served on faculty at New Mexico State University and North Carolina State University, and as a technical services specialist for Monsanto Dairy Business. From 2000 to 2014, Greg and his wife Rachel operated G&R Dairy Consulting, Inc., an international dairy consulting business based in Blacksburg, VA. Greg consulted with dairy producers and allied industry throughout the US and around the globe, working in Europe, Asia, and Australia.

Greg spent a few years in Wisconsin, serving as CFO for the Pagel Family Businesses in Kewaunee, WI from 2014 to 2016. In 2017 Greg moved to Kansas and realized his lifelong dream of becoming a dairyman. Since 2017 he has been managing partner in High Plains Ponderosa Dairy in Plains KS and currently serves as CEO.



Notes:

Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Friday, February 6, 2026 — 9:30 a.m. & 10:50 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 1

Cool Cows, Better Performance: Tackling Heat Stress

Heat stress reduces intake and milk yield in lactating cattle, but it also has dramatic effects in cows during late gestation. Dry cows that experience heat stress have lower yields, poorer health and reduced reproductive performance in the next lactation. In addition, their calves are born at a lower bodyweight, have lower passive transfer from colostrum, and altered behavior. As they mature, calves that were heat stressed in utero have lower reproductive performance and reduced milk yields through the first three lactations relative to herdmates born to cooled dams. These effects compound and drive lower longevity of calves that experienced in utero heat stress, and this is also observed in calves born in summer versus winter. The objectives of this session are to document the impact of late gestation heat stress on dam and daughter, describe approaches to cool cows effectively in late gestation, and estimate the economic returns of heat stress abatement of dry cows.

Dr. Geoff Dahl, University of Florida

Geoffrey E. Dahl is the Harriet B. Weeks Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida, Gainesville. He previously served as Chair of the Department for 12 years, serving as liaison between the university, livestock producers, and allied industries in Florida. During his time as Chair, the department grew in faculty from 25 to 40 tenure track lines, increased from the bottom quartile to the top quartile in research funding, and increased undergraduate enrollment from 500 to over 600 students. In the most recent Center for World University Rankings, the University of Florida was #9 in the world for dairy and animal science (www.cwur.org/2017/s). Geoff has been invited to serve on a number of external programmatic and grant evaluation panels in the US and abroad. He was active in development of the proposal that brought the USAID Livestock Systems Innovation Laboratory, a \$49 million project, to the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida, and currently serves as Director of the lab.



Dr. Dahl conducts applied and basic research with direct impact on dairy production. Specific research interests include effects of photoperiod manipulation on production and health, the impact of frequent milking in early lactation on milk production, and heat stress abatement during the dry period on cow and calf productivity and health. Those research efforts are disseminated through his Extension programming in the US and abroad. Indeed, Dr. Dahl has been invited to present his research findings in 20 countries and Geoff has active Extension program efforts in a variety of developing countries including Sri Lanka, Nepal, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Dr. Dahl has authored over 160 peer-reviewed papers and numerous symposium and popular press articles. He has trained 27 graduate students and post-doctoral fellows

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Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Friday, February 6, 2026 — 8:30 a.m. & 11:55 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 2 (8:30 a.m.) & Room 1 (11:55 a.m.)

Optimizing Dairy Forages: Proven Strategies for Success

Maximizing forage quality is the #1 key to development of successful dairy rations. In this session we will discuss the latest trends and developments in the production of high-quality forages for dairy rations, including alternatives to BMR, low-lignin alfalfa and cover crop forages. Furthermore, we will discuss ideal metrics to consider when evaluating forages and formulating dairy cow rations.



Dr. Isaac Salfer, University of Minnesota

Dr. Isaac Salfer is an assistant professor of Dairy Nutritional Physiology at the University of Minnesota, with a joint appointment in teaching (50%) and research (50%). Dr. Salfer's research program focuses on improving feed efficiency and productivity in dairy cattle through a variety of approaches. These include: investigating circadian and seasonal changes in metabolism studying the effects of rumen modifiers on nitrogen and energy utilization, enhancing the characterization of perennial forage crop digestibility, and developing preweaning nutritional strategies to improve gain and feed efficiency of dairy and beef × dairy calves.

Notes:

Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Friday, February 6, 2026 — 9:30 a.m. & 11:55 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 3

Reproduction Success Through Automation: Tools for Today's Dairy

Adoption of data-driven technologies by dairy farms creates opportunities for improving herd performance and management practices through precision management. In this presentation, Dr. Giordano will cover the latest research and practical application of targeted reproductive programs incorporating data from automated monitoring systems, genomics, and other readily available data on dairy farms. Special emphasis will be placed on the practical and herd performance implications of integrating multiple data-driven tools for herd management. In this presentation we will discuss the latest concepts on reproductive biology and management of dairy cattle as well as the implications of reproductive performance on herd profitability. The implementation of reproductive management strategies for dairy farms with different management philosophies and resources will be discussed. Special emphasis will be placed on targeted reproductive management strategies integrating synchronization of estrus and ovulation, technologies for detection of estrus, sexed semen, and genomics.

Dr. Julio Giordano, Cornell University

Dr. Julio Giordano is the director of the Dairy Cattle Biology and Management Laboratory in the Department of Animal Science at Cornell University, Director of the Cornell Agricultural Systems Testbed for the Farm the Future, and a Co-Director of the Cornell Institute for Digital Agriculture (CIDA).

Dr. Giordano's research focuses on the development, implementation, and evaluation of technology and novel management strategies for dairy production systems. The overarching goal of his research program is to integrate concepts of animal biology, farm management, engineering, and data-analytics for enhancing the reproductive performance, health, and profitability of dairy farms. Dr. Giordano's group has pioneered research with dairy cattle reproductive biology and health, precision technologies, automation of management tasks, and development of data-driven solutions such as targeted reproductive and health management of dairy herds. Ultimately, Dr. Giordano's research group works to improve dairy production systems through a deeper understanding of cow biology and the implementation of advanced technology.





Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Friday, February 6, 2026 — 10:50 a.m. & 11:55 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 2

Creating Teams for Success

Running a dairy isn't just about cows, feed, and milk—it's about people. In this practical, hands-on session, Jason Reid, IBA Consultant, shows dairy owners and managers how to lead in a way that actually works on the farm. He focuses on vulnerable leadership, inclusion, and creating a sense of belonging, while also helping you navigate the unique challenges of family dynamics and multi-generational teams. Jason shares real-world strategies for getting your whole team on the same page: making sure everyone knows what to do, why it matters, and where their work fits into the bigger picture. You'll learn how to build trust, set clear expectations, develop leaders from within, and create a culture where employees—family or not—feel valued and motivated to help the farm succeed. Farmers and managers will leave with practical tools they can use immediately to improve teamwork, reduce confusion, strengthen accountability, and grow a dairy operation where success is shared and people want to stick around.



Jason Reid, IBA Inc.

Jason holds a bachelors of science in Animal Science and a master of arts in Rural Planning, both from the University of Wyoming. He attended Instituto de Cervantes in Quito, Ecuador for Spanish language studies. He has traveled extensively throughout Latin America and has a thorough understanding of Latino cultures from South America to Mexico.

Jason has worked extensively in beef and dairy production throughout the United States. He currently works as a bilingual milking efficiency and labor consultant for customers of IBA Dairy Supplies. His passions include kettlebells, cows and downhill skiing with his daughter.

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Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Friday, February 6, 2026 — 10:50 a.m.

Breakout Session - Room 3

Move In, Move Out: What's Best for Fresh Cows?

For several decades, fresh cow pens have been a focal point for dairy managers. However, the traditional approach of keep fresh cows separated for 3 weeks is quickly losing favor. This talk will explore the evidence around fresh cow housing and ask what the optimal timing is for “graduation” from the fresh pen, particularly in the era of rumination monitoring.



Dr. Barry Bradford, Michigan State University

Bradford completed dual bachelor's degrees at Iowa State University and a doctorate in animal nutrition at Michigan State University. He served on the faculty at Kansas State University from 2006 to 2019, and in 2020 he returned to Michigan State as the Clint Meadows Chair in Dairy Management. Bradford's research focuses on dairy cattle nutrition and metabolism, including dietary utilization of byproducts in lactation diets, the physiological impacts of inflammation after calving, and the roles of nutrients as signals. In his current role, Bradford carries out research and works directly with dairy producers to find solutions to dairy management challenges

Notes:



Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Friday, February 6, 2026 — 1:45 p.m.

Closing Keynote - Main Stage

The Bottom Line: Unlocking Dairy Profitability

“The Bottom Line: Unlocking Dairy Profitability” presentation will focus on the role of 2025 forage quality in building economical rations and the role of cover crop forages. Building the milk check will feature pounds of milk solids (milk fat and milk protein) with the target over 7.5 pounds per cow per day. On-farm tools include feed efficiency, protein efficiency, and milk solids efficiency will be discussed. Other measurements can include kernel processing score, MUN levels, fecal starch, and feed particle size. An update on transition cow feed additives will be explored.

Dr. Mike Hutjens, University of Illinois - Urbana

Mike Hutjens was raised grade Holstein farm near Green Bay, Wisconsin. His bachelor, masters, and Ph.D. degrees were awarded from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

From 1971 to 1979, Dr. Hutjens was extension dairy specialist at the University of Minnesota where he coached the national champion team in 1978 at the World Dairy Expo. Since 1979, he has been a member of the University of Illinois Animal Sciences Departments as extension dairy specialist. He speaks at 60 to 70 meetings at conferences in 46 states, 17 foreign countries, and nine Canadian provinces. Mike writes feed columns for Hoard’s Dairyman and presents the Hoard’s Dairy monthly webinars.

Award recognitions include the Undergraduate Teaching Purina Award from the American Dairy Science Association, National DeLaval Extension Worker Award, ADSA, Applied Nutrition Award from ADSA, Outstanding Extramural Instructor (University award) in 1993 and 2000, and two citations from the Minnesota Board of Regents,. Mike was president of the American Dairy Science Association. In 2008, he was select “Service Person of the Year” by World Dairy Expo. In 2009, he received the Award of Honor from ADSA and Fellow, the “Eagle Award” from the IL Farm Bureau Association, the national DHI Service in 2013, and the Dairy Shrine Person of the Year in 2019. Currently, Mike is teaching on-line to 1200 international students in five languages with monthly updates and a weekly podcast.

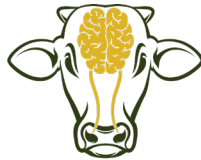
He resides in Savoy, IL, with his wife, Carol and five children and seven grandchildren. Mike served six years in the U.S. Army Reserve Mike retired from the University of Illinois on Dec 31, 2010.



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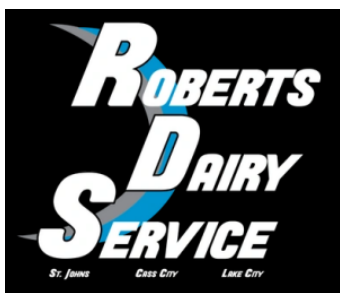
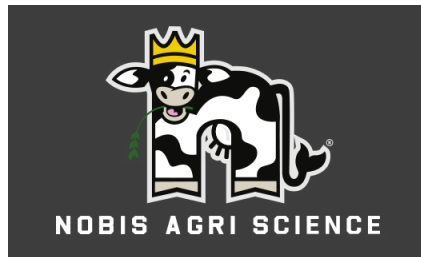
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HARVEY'S





Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Herdsperson Session - Tres Fuegos Friday, February 6, 2026 — 9:30 a.m.

Trabajando en Equipo con el Hato: Cómo Ser un Buen Líder en el Rancho

Cada persona en la lechería es importante, y cuando los encargados y los trabajadores se comunican bien con los supervisores y propietarios, toda la granja funciona mejor. En esta sesión práctica, Jason Reid, Consultor de IBA, habla directamente a los trabajadores de sobre formas prácticas de comunicarse con sus superiores, compartir ideas, hacer preguntas y resolver problemas en la granja. Esta sesión enfatiza la confianza, el respeto y la inclusión, demostrando a los trabajadores cómo su contribución y liderazgo pueden mejorar directamente la salud del rebaño, la producción de leche y el éxito general de la granja. Los participantes saldrán con un plan y estrategias para ser escuchados, marcar la diferencia y ayudar a que la granja funcione mejor, mientras construyen relaciones más sólidas con supervisores y compañeros.



Jason Reid, IBA Inc.

Jason Reid posee una licenciatura en Ciencia Animal y una maestría en Planificación Rural, ambas de la Universidad de Wyoming. Estudió español en el Instituto Cervantes de Quito, Ecuador. Ha viajado extensamente por América Latina y tiene un gran conocimiento de las culturas latinas desde Sudamérica hasta México. Jason ha trabajado ampliamente en la producción de carne y leche en los Estados Unidos. Actualmente trabaja como consultor bilingüe en eficiencia de ordeño y gestión laboral para clientes de IBA Dairy Supplies. Sus pasiones incluyen el ejercicio, las vacas y el esquí alpino con su hija.

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Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions



Herdsperson Session - Tres Fuegos Friday, February 6, 2026 — 10:50 a.m.

Reproducción Bien Hecha: Capacitación Esencial para Encargados del Hato Lechero

Esta presentación se centra en los factores y prácticas de manejo más importantes y su impacto en las decisiones reproductivas diarias del hato lechero. El seminario aborda cuándo y por qué elegir programas que prioricen la inseminación, ya sea a tiempo fijo o con detección de celo, y cómo implementar estas estrategias de manera efectiva. El objetivo es brindar herramientas concretas basadas en evidencia científica y experiencia práctica para evaluar y mejorar el desempeño reproductivo, convirtiendo esta capacitación en una oportunidad transformadora para quienes buscan optimizar su enfoque en reproducción de ganado de leche.

Dr. Julio Giordano, Cornell University

El Dr. Julio Giordano es el director del Laboratorio de Biología y Manejo del Ganado Lechero en el Departamento de Ciencia Animal de la Universidad de Cornell, Director del Banco de Pruebas de Sistemas Agrícolas para la Agricultura del Futuro., y Co-Director del Instituto de Agricultura Digital de Cornell. La investigación del Dr. Giordano se centra en el desarrollo, implementación y evaluación de tecnología y nuevas estrategias de manejo para los sistemas de producción lechera. El objetivo de su programa de investigación es integrar conceptos de biología animal, gestión de granjas, ingeniería y análisis de datos para mejorar el rendimiento reproductivo, la salud y la rentabilidad de las granjas lecheras. El grupo del Dr. Giordano ha sido pionero en investigación sobre biología reproductiva y salud del ganado lechero, tecnologías de precisión, automatización de tareas de manejo y desarrollo de soluciones basadas en datos, como el manejo estratégico reproductivo y sanitario de las granjas lecheras. Como meta general, el grupo de investigación del Dr. Giordano trabaja para mejorar los sistemas de producción lechera mediante una comprensión más profunda de la biología de la vaca y la implementación de tecnología avanzada.



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Speaker Profiles and Session Descriptions

Herdsperson Session - Tres Fuegos Friday, February 6, 2026 — 11:55 a.m.

Su Granja, Sus Preguntas: Junta Interactiva con los Expertos

¿Tiene alguna duda o un problema específico en su rancho? ¡Esta es su oportunidad para consultar con los expertos! El Dr. Angel y la Dra. Paola responderán a sus preguntas sobre diversos temas, desde la salud del rebaño y el cuidado de los becerros hasta la optimización de la sala de ordeño. Venga preparado para resolver problemas y descubrir estrategias prácticas que podrá aplicar en su granja.

Dr. Angel Abuelo, Associate Professor, Michigan State University

El Dr. Ángel Abuelo es médico veterinario y profesor asociado de salud bovina en el Departamento de Ciencias Clínicas de Animales Mayores de la Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria de la Universidad Estatal de Michigan (MSU por su sigla en inglés). Su pasión abarca la medicina interna de bovinos y la medicina de producción lechera, así como la formación de la próxima generación de veterinarios de ganado. Por ello, el Dr. Abuelo distribuye su tiempo entre la enseñanza a estudiantes de veterinaria, la prestación de servicios veterinarios a granjas lecheras e investigación que ayuda al avance de la industria láctea. Sus intereses de investigación están relacionados con el periodo de transición de las vacas lecheras (particularmente la interacción entre el metabolismo de nutrientes, el estrés oxidativo y la inmunología) y el manejo de la salud de becerras. Más allá de su investigación, colabora con el servicio de Extensión de MSU para educar y ayudar aún más a la industria lechera. Adicionalmente, el Dr. Abuelo participa en un proyecto conjunto del USDA con las Facultades de Veterinaria de Cornell y Wisconsin para aliviar la escasez de veterinarios rurales en EE. UU., donde se les enseña a los estudiantes de veterinaria sobre la práctica rural y se brinda educación continua a veterinarios en etapa temprana de su carrera que trabajan en áreas con escasez de servicios veterinarios.



Dr. Paola Bacigalupo Sanguesa, Michigan State University Extension

La Dra. Paola Bacigalupo es Educadora de Extensión de ganado de leche para la Universidad Estatal de Michigan, donde su trabajo se enfoca en eficiencia de la sala de ordeño y de ordeño y salud mamaria. También ayuda a las granjas con protocolos y educación en diversos temas incluyendo maternidad, cuidado de becerros, vacas caídas, y prácticas de ordeño. Bacigalupo nació en Chile y estudió medicina veterinaria en la Universidad de Chile. Luego, obtuvo su maestría en la Universidad Estatal de Colorado, donde su investigación se centró en la epidemiología del ganado lechero y un doctorado en la Universidad Estatal de Michigan donde su investigación se enfocó en la fisiología del ordeño.



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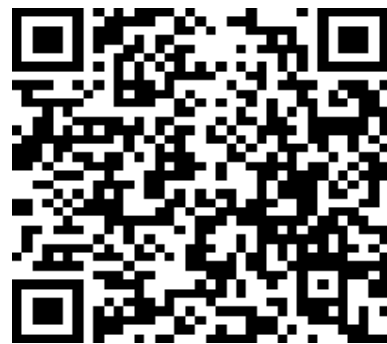
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