



Midwest Dairy 2025 Annual Report

Table of Contents

Financials.....	3
Midwest Dairy Program Expense Areas	4
Midwest Dairy Program Income Areas.....	6
Midwest Dairy Leadership	7
Trust.....	19
Wellness warriors are putting dairy farmers on the health map	20
Adopt a Cow connects dairy to classrooms and communities	22
Dairy fuels performance: Midwest Dairy expands college athletics partnerships.....	23
Working with influencers to drive trust for dairy.....	25
Sales.....	26
Key moments lead to big sales in 2025	27
Scooter’s partnership boosts dairy in iced drinks.....	30
Seasonal dairy flavors finish strong at Kwik Trip	31
Driving dairy sales through the holiday season	32
Research.....	34
Dairy is meeting the moment with today’s consumers.....	35
Checkoff-funded science moving dairy forward	36
South Dakota Dairy Ambassador couples promotion with research.....	38
Convenience meets function: RoseBud Ice Cream and Zoguri named winners in Midwest Dairy’s Future of Dairy Innovation Accelerator Pitch Event.....	39
Developing Leaders.....	41
29 Dairy Ambassadors and Princesses Advocate for Dairy in 2025.....	42
Undeniably Dairy Grants bring dairy to life.....	45
17 farmers graduate from Class 3 of the DEAL Program.....	47
Lasso grants fuel on-farm innovation	48



Financials

Midwest Dairy Program Expense Areas

Total Expenses: \$24.5 Million

National Projects and Partnerships (25%) – The 2.5 cent funding sent to Dairy Management Inc. for research & promotion and the United Dairy Industry Association fee, both a part of our membership commitment.

- **Dairy Experience (41%)** – consumer-focused programming and implementation of key components of the dairy checkoff’s nationwide Unified Marketing Plan.
 - **Sales – Demand (12%)** – Building dairy sales through retail, food service
 - **Sales – Youth (1%)** – Drive dairy sales, including work with targeted school districts
 - **Trust – Thought Leaders (7%)** – Relationship building with credentialed health and sustainability professionals to create dairy advocates
 - **Trust – Adult (11%)** – The Undeniably Dairy platform and other marketing communications using third-party influencers to reach consumers
 - **Trust – Youth (7%)** – Ag literacy programs to drive awareness of sustainable nutrition through programs to grow trust among youth and their parents
 - **Strategic Insights (3%)** – Evaluating consumer attitude and behavior to measure trends in consumer trust

Research (5%) – Product research through the Midwest Dairy Food Research Center and efforts focused on nutrition research and consumer insights.

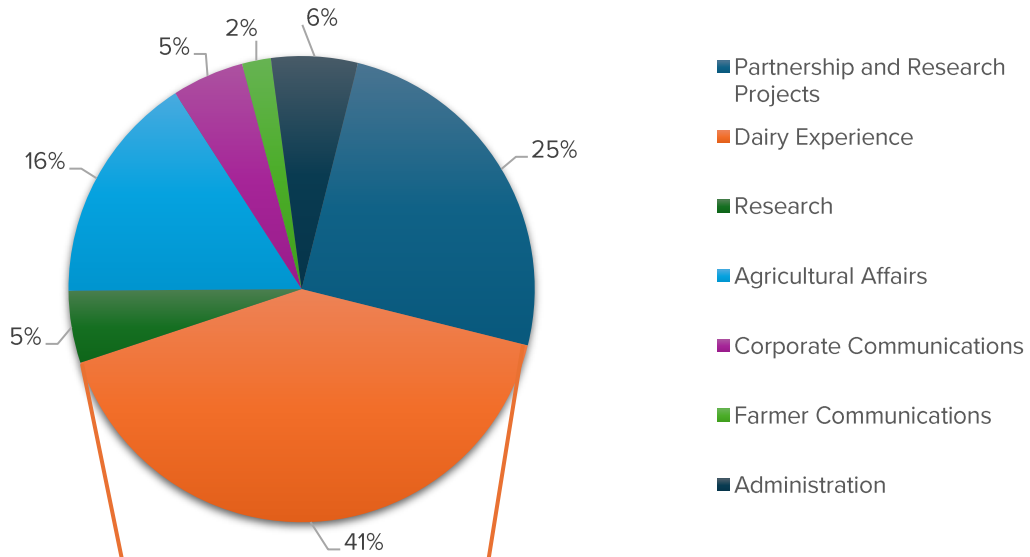
Ag Affairs (16%) – Leadership development with farmers and dairy ambassadors. Coalition-building with other ag groups and providing resources to support dairy farmers.

Corporate Communications (5%) – Positioning with stakeholders, distributing content through digital channels, and crisis and issues preparedness.

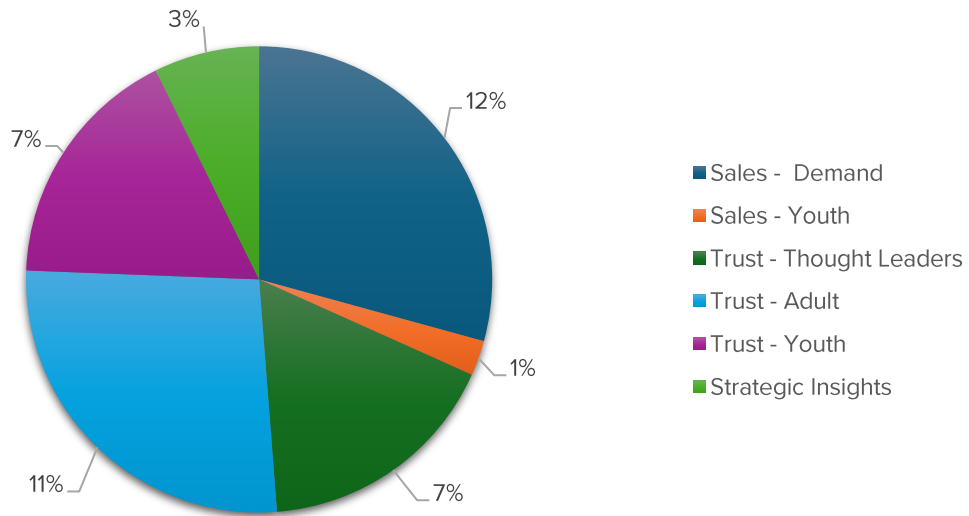
Farmer Communications (2%) – Communication with internal audiences, including farmer investors, board members, and employees.

Administration (6%) – Includes the cost of our accounting and network infrastructure, as well as our governance of board costs.

2025 Expenses by Spending Category



2025 Dairy Experience Breakdown



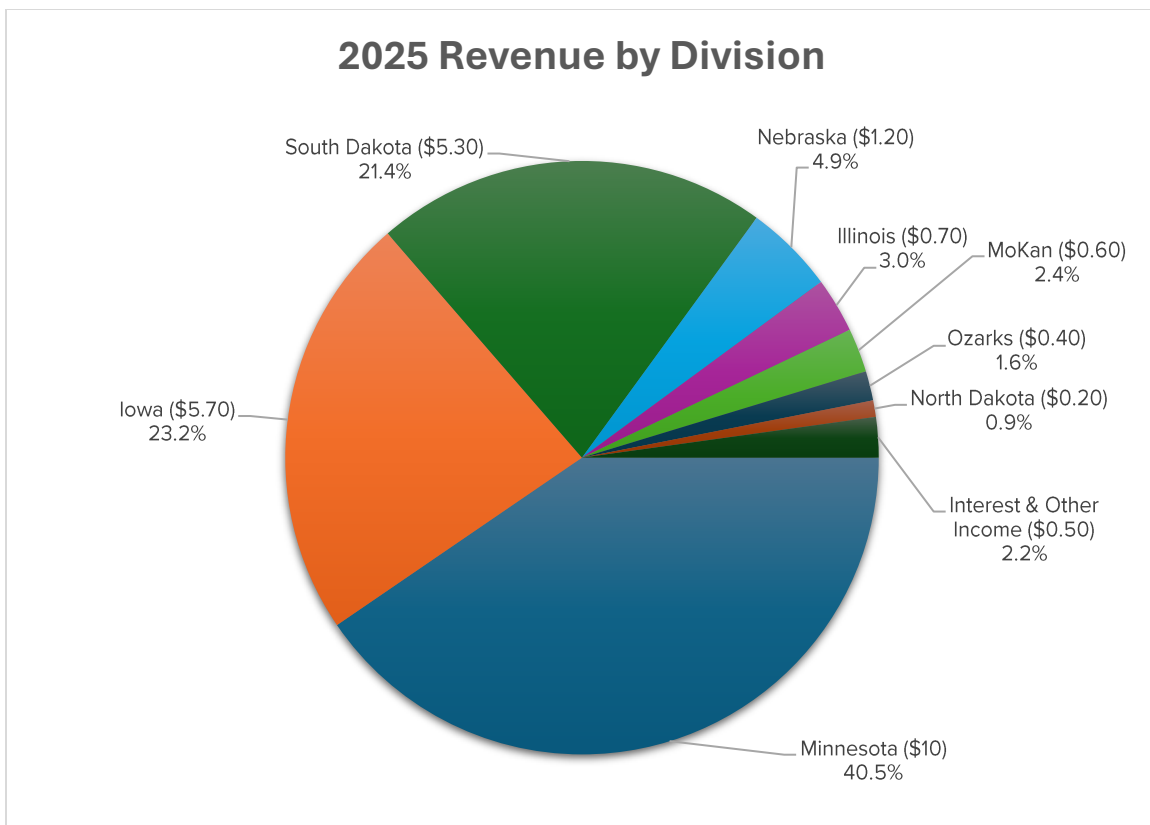
5 Please note: All financial figures are rounded to the nearest digit.

Midwest Dairy Program Income Areas

2025 Revenue by Division (\$Millions)

Total Revenue: \$24.6 Million

Minnesota	\$10.0	40.5%
Iowa	\$5.7	23.2%
South Dakota	\$5.3	21.4%
Nebraska	\$1.2	4.9%
Illinois	\$0.7	3.0%
MoKan Division	\$0.6	2.4%
Ozarks	\$0.4	1.6%
North Dakota	\$0.2	0.9%
Interest and Other Income	\$0.5	2.2%





Midwest Dairy Leadership

Corey Scott, CEO

Corey Scott is the CEO of Midwest Dairy, the dairy promotion organization that works on behalf of dairy farm families across 10 Midwestern states to build trust and demand for dairy products. Scott is the organization's fourth CEO in its nearly 25-year history. Her long-standing service to dairy farmers throughout her career has allowed Scott to see firsthand the passion farmers show for their cows, the environment, and their communities. She is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to lead such a respected checkoff organization.



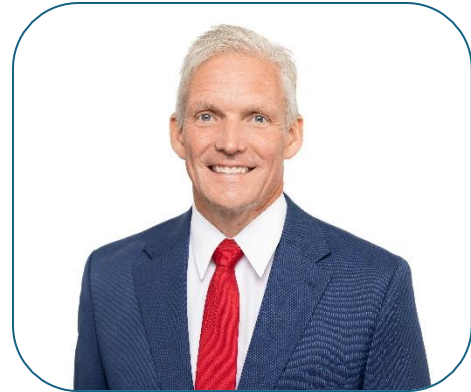
Scott joined Midwest Dairy in March of 2024. Before joining Midwest Dairy, Scott served as Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Athian and held several leadership positions for over 15 years at Land O'Lakes and its sustainability division, Truterra LLC. Currently, she resides in Marine on Saint Croix, Minnesota. Scott received her Executive MBA and undergraduate degrees from the University of Minnesota and the Carlson School of Business. Notably, in 2023, she was selected as one of GreenBiz's 12 Women Cultivating Sustainable Food Systems and earned a U.S. Dairy Sustainability Award for her work in reducing dairy's overall environmental footprint.

In her role as CEO, Scott supports the Midwest Dairy Board and provides strategic guidance to Midwest Dairy's staff as they work to fulfill both the organization's vision to bring dairy to life and its mission to give consumers an excellent dairy experience. Scott's passion for sustainability fuels the organization's commitment to consumer-centric goals, driving sales and building consumer trust in dairy. Through her leadership, Midwest Dairy maximizes dairy farmers' investment in the dairy checkoff by strategically collaborating with and through partners and focusing on research, leading to the development of products that meet the needs of today's changing consumer.

In this position, Scott plays a lead role in ensuring that the Midwest dairy industry captures its share of the growing global and domestic demand for dairy products. Consumers in the U.S. and worldwide are increasingly turning to dairy foods because they taste great and offer a strong nutritional profile that includes protein, a nutrient many seek. The U.S. dairy industry is committed to sustainable nutrition, a position recognized favorably among domestic and multinational food companies.

Charles Krause, Chair

Charles Krause, of Krause Holsteins, located in Buffalo, Minnesota, is the chair of Midwest Dairy. Krause Holsteins is a multigenerational dairy farm that first began in 1959 and currently milks around 350 cows. The Krause family has been farming in Wright County for over 150 years, and Krause himself is a fifth-generation farmer. Krause and his wife, Robyn, graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1991 and then had the opportunity to join the family farm full-time. Krause also farms with his son, Andrew, and his daughter-in-law, Maggie, who helps wherever needed. Krause grows his own feed on 500 acres.



Krause plays a prominent role in the dairy promotion industry. In addition to serving as Midwest Dairy chair, he has been an officer on the Midwest Dairy division board since 2007 and a member of the corporate board since 2010. His past officer positions include serving as the corporate board's first vice chair since 2016. He also serves on the United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA) board as Chair and serves the Global Dairy Platform as a United States Ambassador.

In the past, Krause has received recognition as:

- Farmer Communicator of the Year award from the National Milk Producers Federation
- National Dairy Shrine Progressive Dairymen of the Year
- Minnesota Milk Producer of the Year
- Dairy Farmers of America Members of Distinction
- Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame Inductee

Krause is also involved in a variety of dairy and community leadership positions, such as Dairy Farmers of America-Central Area Council Vice Chair, Centra Sota Cooperative Board of Directors, and the Buffalo FFA Alumni. In his spare time, Charles enjoys traveling with his wife, Robyn.

2025 Corporate Board Officers



Corporate Board members include Rita Young, Secretary; Dan Hotvedt, First Vice Chair; Charles Krause, Chair; Bill Deutsch, Second Vice Chair; and Matt Schelling, Treasurer.

Division Board Leadership: Illinois Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- **Bill Deutsch, Sycamore**
- Kristi Dinderman, Orangeville
- Frank Doll, Pocahontas
- Bryan Henrichs, Breese
- Amy Hildebrandt, South Beloit
- Megan Holland-Zito, Apple River
- David Jarden, Staunton
- Kurt Johnson, Greenville
- Kappy Koch, Tremont
- Donald Mackinson, Pontiac
- Glen Meier, Ridott
- Craig Meng, Freeburg
- **Brent Mueller, Garden Prairie**
- Steve Obert, Orangeville
- Toby Probst, Wheeler

Board Officers:

- Chair – Bill Deutsch
- Vice Chair – Brent Mueller
- Secretary – Amy Hildebrandt
- Treasurer – Glen Meier

Division Board Leadership: Iowa Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- Katherine Boelen, Brooklyn
- **Pam Bolin, Clarksville**
- Jennifer Bronner, Cresco
- Jeff Dresser, Keokuk
- Jolene Duitscher, Rolfe
- **Alan Feuerhelm, Le Mars**
- Fred Hall (Ex Officio), ISU
- Mark Hamlett, Aurora
- **Robert Horst, Bristow**
- **Dan Hotvedt, Decorah**
- Patrick Jones, Spencer
- **Lee Maassen, Maurice**
- Dennis Mashek, Calmar
- Anthony Nunes, Sibley
- **Matt Schelling, Orange City**
- **Jonna Schutte, Monona**
- Matt Simon, Dyersville

Board Officers:

- Chair – Jonna Schutte
- Vice Chair – Lee Maassen
- Secretary – Patrick Jones
- Treasurer – Pam Bolin

Division Board Leadership: Minnesota Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- **Anthony Anderson, Henning**
- Jean Annexstad, St. Peter
- **Mindi Arendt, Mazeppa**
- Angie Barlau (Ex Officio), Waverly
- **Eric Hoese, Mayer**
- Shirley Hulinsky, Burtrum
- **Margaret Johnson, Fountain**
- **Karen Kasper, Owatonna**
- **Charles Krause, Buffalo**
- **Sarah Kuechle, Eden Valley**
- **Kate McAndrews, Sauk Centre**
- **Wayne Saemrow, Waterville**
- Dave Schwartz, Slayton
- Eric Sonnek, Foreston
- **Kristine Spadgenske, Menahga**
- Elle Tibor, Minnesota City (Ex Officio)
- Annie Vannurden, Royalton
- **Suzanne Vold, Glenwood**
- **Rita Young, Plainview**
- Kennedy Youngren, Waverly (Ex Officio)

Board Officers:

- Chair – Kristine Spadgenske
- Vice Chair – Kate McAndrews
- Secretary – Mindi Arendt
- Treasurer – Rita Young

Division Board Leadership: MoKan Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- Darren Benfer, Longford
- Ted Bruemmer, Jefferson City
- Sean Cornelius, Hamilton
- Lynda Foster, Fort Scott
- Brian Haverkamp, Seneca
- Chris Heins, Higginsville
- Byron Lehman, Newton
- Orville Miller, Hutchinson
- Tom Oelrichs, Mora
- **Steve Ohlde, Linn**
- **Alex Peterson, Trenton**
- David Rottinghaus, Seneca
- Steve Strickler, Iola
- Donna Telle, Uniontown
- Heidi Wells, Milton

Board Officers:

- Chair – Steve Ohlde
- Vice Chair – Orville Miller
- Secretary – Heidi Wells
- Treasurer – Lynda Foster

Division Board Leadership: Nebraska Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- Mike Amen, Norfolk
- Greg Bleeker, Emerson
- Jodi Cast, Beaver Crossing
- David Crook, Humboldt
- Brooke Engelman, Jansen
- Paul Kononoff, PhD (Ex Officio), UNL
- Doug Nuttelman, Stromsburg
- **Joyce Racicky, Mason City**
- Marshall Reece (Ex Officio), AMPI
- Larry Schuster, Pickrell
- Heath Snodgrass (Ex Officio), Orchard
- **Mary Temme, Wayne**

Board Officers:

- Chair – Joyce Racicky
- Vice Chair – Larry Schuster
- Secretary/Treasurer – Jodi Cast

Division Board Leadership: North Dakota Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- Johnny Campos (Ex Officio), Cass Clay
- Terry Entzminger, Jamestown
- Jennifer Holle, Mandan
- **Sue Kleingartner, Gackle**
- **Lilah Krebs, Gladstone**
- Nathan Kroh (Ex Officio), ND Department of Agriculture
- Kim Ledger, Bismarck
- Casey Murphy (Ex Officio), Cows & Co. Creamery
- Denise Rohweder, Wishek
- Guillermo Scaglia (Ex Officio), NDSU
- Kyle Severance, Dickey
- Piet vanBedaf, Carrington

Board Officers:

- Chair – Sue Kleingartner
- Vice Chair – Terry Entzminger
- Secretary – Kim Ledger
- Treasurer – Lilah Krebs

Division Board Leadership: Ozarks Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- **Marilyn Calvin, Mt. Vernon**
- Charles Coblentz, Chouteau
- Jack Dill, Conway
- Earl Dotson, Marionville
- Mark Fellwock, Monett
- Bill Haak, Gentry
- Randy Mooney, Rogersville
- Carrie Rantz, Spokane
- Kaleb Rodgers, Vanzant
- **Nathan Roth, Mountain Grove**
- Scott VanZyverden, Marshfield
- Craig Westfall, Halfway

Board Officers:

- Chair – Nathan Roth
- Vice Chair – Marilyn Calvin
- Secretary – Carrie Rantz
- Treasurer – Bill Haak

Division Board Leadership: South Dakota Division



Bold indicates Corporate Board Member

- Jogchum Andringa, Brandt
- Riley Boadwine, Baltic
- Rebecka Butz, Dolton
- Dorothy Elliott, Lake Norden
- Evan Grong (Ex Officio), Valley Queen Cheese
- Cole Hoyer, Bruce
- **Maartje Lemstra, Humboldt**
- Kim Maher (Ex Officio), Agropur
- Londa Nwadike (Ex Officio), South Dakota State University
- **Doug Ode, Brandon**
- Keven Pearson, Flandreau
- **Marv Post, Volga**
- Hunter Roberts (Ex Officio), SD Department of Agriculture
- Kevin Van Winkle, Canistota
- **Tom Walsh, Degraff, MN**

Board Officers:

- Chair – Marv Post
- Vice Chair – Doug Ode
- Secretary – Maartje Lemstra
- Treasurer – Jogchum Andringa



Trust

Wellness warriors are putting dairy farmers on the health map

In 2025, Midwest Dairy launched the Wellness Warriors program to leverage the expertise of credible dietitian thought leaders in engagements designed to build trust in dairy among school nutritionists, WIC leaders, and other health professionals. These influential dietitians bring expertise in human nutrition, public health, school nutrition, food allergy management, and sustainable food systems. From 2025 through 2026, these Wellness Warriors will be present at conferences, webinars, podcasts, and other platforms to build trust in dairy among influential thought leaders and consumers. Meet a few of these Wellness Warriors below and see what they have been up to!

Cook County Physicians

What started as a spark at Midwest Dairy's 2024 urban farm event in Chicago grew into something powerful this spring. Inspired by that experience, Dr. Yvonne Collins brought a similar event to members of the Cook County Physicians Association (CCPA) in June.

Together with sustainability partner Just Roots, Midwest Dairy hosted a farm-to-table dinner and discussion at the St. James Community Farm in Chicago. Guests toured the urban farm, where half of the food grown is donated, and enjoyed a meal prepared by local chef Sebastian White.

The evening featured impactful conversations with Alicia Nesbary Moore of Herban Produce, dairy farmers Sarah and Andy Lenkaitis, and dietitian Dorian Doss. Dorian Doss is a champion of Midwest Dairy and has recently been activated as a Wellness Warrior. Topics ranged from urban agriculture and sustainable dairy farming to nutrition in Black communities. CCPA members left informed and inspired, citing dairy's health benefits, sustainable farming practices, and its role in reducing disparities as key takeaways.

Arkansas Medical Conference

On June 7, 2025, Midwest Dairy partnered with the Arkansas Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association (AMDPA) to co-host a compelling session during the 2025 AMDPA Scientific Session in Little Rock, Arkansas. The session, "Roots of Health: Closing the Maternal Gap Through Early Life Nutrition," focused on the vital role of maternal nutrition in shaping long-term health outcomes for mothers and their infants.

Wellness Warrior Caroline Weeks, a physician assistant and registered dietitian, led the session with an in-depth presentation on the unique nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women. Weeks emphasized that nutrition-based interventions, particularly those incorporating dairy foods, can improve maternal and infant health, reduce disparities, and support lifelong well-being.

The session concluded with a panel discussion moderated by Dr. William Greenfield, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. The panel featured diverse perspectives from Weeks; Nicolle Fletcher, a doula and midwife; and Zenobia Harris, Executive Director of the Arkansas Birthing Project and Acting Director of Birthing Project USA.

The panel addressed persistent maternal health disparities and emphasized the importance of collaborative, community-based solutions. Their discussion highlighted how inclusive partnerships—spanning healthcare providers, public health leaders, and organizations like Midwest Dairy—can help build a healthier future for mothers and their babies through evidence-based nutrition education and outreach.

Region V National Medical Association and Oklahoma Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

To elevate dairy's role in addressing nutrition equity and health disparities, Midwest Dairy sponsored a session at the Region V National Medical Association's annual conference in early April in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The session, "Opportunities to Close the Nutrition Equity Gap: Amplifying Cultural Relevance of Dairy Foods in Tackling Health Disparities," was led by Wellness Warrior and registered dietitian Krystal Dunham and moderated by Dr. Donald Peghee. The presentation sparked thoughtful discussion among physician attendees, particularly about lactose intolerance and the importance of offering real dairy solutions that support the diverse nutritional needs of patients from various cultural backgrounds.

Midwest Dairy also brought the conversation to the Oklahoma Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (OKAND) Spring Conference, once again sponsoring a session led by Krystal Dunham, who also serves as OKAND President at the time. Her presentation explored the power of milk, cheese, and yogurt to support wellness across life stages, focusing on public health nutrition, cultural relevance, and nutritional accessibility.

Both events served as foundational touchpoints in Midwest Dairy's 2025 campaign, which focuses on the critical role of nutrition, including dairy, during the first 1,000 days of life. Building bridges: How social influencers are partnering with checkoff to share the dairy story

Midwest Dairy partners with online influencers to connect with Generation Z (Gen Z) and adult consumers by showcasing stories about sustainable nutrition in dairy. These influencers use their trusted platforms to promote dairy products and experiences. As a result, Midwest Dairy has increased dairy product visibility, expanded reach to target audiences, and boosted sales through authentic dairy content. Social media is a multibillion-dollar industry that drives more engagement than other entertainment sectors, making it a key tool for Midwest Dairy to connect with consumers.

Midwest Dairy expanded its influencer relationships during the second half of 2024. Keep reading to learn about these influencer activations!

Adopt a Cow connects dairy to classrooms and communities

During the 2025 back-to-school season, Midwest Dairy partnered with Discover Dairy to promote the Adopt a Cow program to create meaningful connections between dairy farmers, students, and communities across the 10-state region. This free program links real dairy farms with classrooms and learning centers, giving students a firsthand look at where milk comes from and how farmers care for their animals.

By meeting students where they learn, Midwest Dairy continues to build trust and understanding around modern dairy farming while helping teachers bring agriculture into everyday lessons.

Learning Through a Real Calf

Through the Adopt a Cow program, students followed the growth of a real calf throughout the school year. Farmers shared photos, farm updates, and live virtual calf chats, giving students a behind-the-scenes look at daily life on a dairy farm.

Teachers shared how they used the calf's growth to teach math, science, and problem-solving in creative ways. Watching the calf grow helped turn lessons into something personal and memorable for students, making dairy part of their everyday learning.

Reaching Beyond the Classroom

While the program is designed for schools, Adopt a Cow also expanded into Boys & Girls Clubs, libraries, daycares, and senior living centers. This broader reach helped bring dairy's story to more audiences and extended learning beyond traditional classrooms.

Six Midwest Dairy farm hosts played a key role in delivering the program:

- Berning Dairy (Illinois)
- College of the Ozarks (Missouri)
- JJC Jerseys (Nebraska)
- Groetsch Dairy (Minnesota)
- Rottinghaus Holstein Farm (Kansas)
- Takes Dairy (Iowa)

These farms helped create direct farmer-to-student connections that strengthened understanding of animal care, environmental practices, and what it takes to produce milk every day.

Strong Results Across the Region

In 2025, Midwest Dairy expanded the program to support 5,324 educators and reach approximately 162,951 students. Survey results showed positive gains in student and teacher perceptions of animal care, environmental stewardship, and general knowledge about dairy farming.

These outcomes demonstrate that Adopt a Cow is an effective and scalable way to share dairy's story while delivering real value back to farmers.

Building Trust for the Future

By connecting farmers directly with classrooms and community spaces, Midwest Dairy is helping the next generation better understand how dairy fits into food, science, and daily life, strengthening long-term trust in dairy and the families who produce it.

Dairy fuels performance: Midwest Dairy expands college athletics partnerships

Midwest Dairy is proud to continue building trust with consumers by teaming up with some of the region's most beloved athletic programs. From Nebraska to Illinois to South Dakota, these partnerships highlight dairy's role in fueling performance, wellness, and sustainability, all while creating memorable fan experiences.

Big 12 Conference

Dairy made a strong impact across the Big 12 Conference in 2025. At the Big 12 Wrestling Championship in Tulsa, fans visited the Cozy Cow Lounge to enjoy milk and cereal and participate in dairy trivia for prizes. At the Phillips 66 Big 12 Women's and Men's Basketball Championships in Kansas City, dairy was featured prominently through the Big 12 Eats menu—where 80% of items included dairy—along with a “Moo-ve and Groove” silent disco. Over 10 million impressions were made through these events.

In December, Midwest Dairy partnered with Dairy MAX to expand dairy's presence at women's soccer and football championship events in Texas. Fans engaged with Dairy MAX's Better with Dairy brand through a 360° video booth, giveaways, and samples of the official Dallas Cowboys' macaroni and cheese, further reinforcing dairy's role in fueling athletes and fans alike.

Husker Athletics

Our strong partnership with Husker Athletics continues in 2025 with activations designed to connect Gen Z, parents, and general consumers to the power of dairy. Highlights include:

- **Digital Student Athlete Influencer Content** – Relatable videos and posts featuring athletes sharing how dairy supports their wellness and sustainability goals.
- **Radio Ads During Volleyball Broadcasts** – Fans will hear a Husker Volleyball player share why they're “Powered by Dairy: Fueled for the game. Focused on the future.”
- **Dairy Farmer Commercial** – Airing Mondays on the Nebraska Coaches Show, spotlighting the people behind the product.
- **Trivia Tuesdays** – Fun, fan-focused dairy trivia on Husker Athletics' social channels.
- **Flex Cam Powered by Dairy** – Debuting at select volleyball and basketball games, letting fans show their strength live on the big screen.

Through this long-standing partnership, dairy continues to shine as essential fuel for both athletes and everyday life.

Fighting Illini Athletics

This fall, Midwest Dairy is excited to launch a new partnership with the University of Illinois Fighting Illini Athletics. Together, Midwest Dairy highlights the role dairy plays in recovery, performance, and overall wellness. Fans can look forward to a new Flex Cam powered by dairy. At every home football game, fans will be encouraged to flex their muscles on the big screen and celebrate dairy-powered strength. Fans will also see an Athlete + Sports Dietitian video series. This special social media series, airing from October through December, features student athlete influencers and Illini sports dietitians sharing why dairy is their go-to fuel for performance and recovery. The sponsorship strengthens Midwest Dairy's efforts to connect with fans and showcase the benefits of dairy nutrition in fun, authentic ways.

Iowa State University

At Iowa State University (ISU), Midwest Dairy connected with Gen Z students through a partnership with Cyclone Sports Properties, LLC, focused on authentic storytelling and athlete involvement. The centerpiece was a farm-to-fan video featuring ISU volleyball student-athlete Morgan Brandt and dairy student Haley Ronnebaum, a former Iowa Dairy Princess. Together, they toured the ISU Dairy Farm, highlighting sustainability practices and showcasing the care and innovation behind dairy production—including the journey of the iconic Clone Cone served at Hilton Coliseum. This content helped deepen students' understanding of where dairy comes from and how farmers prioritize sustainability.

Kansas State University

Partnering with college athlete influencers continues to help dairy remain relevant to Gen Z while reinforcing its connection to wellness and nutrition. At Kansas State University, Midwest Dairy partnered with volleyball athletes Tatum Tindall and Makinsey Jones, who shared how chocolate milk authentically fits into their daily routines. Their two Instagram posts reached more than 8,800 unique people, generating 34,603 impressions and 1,121 engagements—clear indicators that their audiences were receptive to dairy content and that college-athlete influencer partnerships can effectively amplify dairy's message.

University of Minnesota

In 2025, Midwest Dairy launched its partnership with Gopher Men's Hockey, targeting adult Gen Z consumers throughout the hockey season. For all home games, Midwest Dairy sponsored the "Ice Box," a student section offering free tickets on a first-come, first-served basis. Each game featured messaging about dairy sustainability and cow care, resulting in over 190,000 impressions for the season. An interactive element activation included a trivia spin wheel at four games over two weekends. More than 500 consumers participated in the trivia and received branded hockey puck keychains. This activation successfully engaged one of Midwest Dairy's key demographics, providing direct and indirect interactions throughout the Gophers' winning season while delivering messages that resonated with students and their peers.

South Dakota State University

At South Dakota State University (SDSU), the SDSU Dairy Drive continues to unite the dairy community, fans, and student-athletes. Partners, including Valley Queen, Bel Brands, AMPI, Prairie Farms, and the SDSU Dairy Science Department, join Midwest Dairy to create memorable game-day experiences.

New this year, fans will hear radio clips featuring student-athlete voices during football and basketball broadcasts. With more than 22,000 listeners per game, this platform is a powerful way to share dairy's nutrition and sustainability story. Each clip closes with: "From powering performance to supporting everyday health, dairy helps us all bring our best game. Go Big, Go Blue, Go Jacks! See dairy differently at USDairy.com."

Whether it's in the heart of Husker Nation, at Fighting Illini home games, or with Jackrabbit fans in South Dakota, Midwest Dairy is committed to connecting with consumers in authentic, exciting ways. These partnerships highlight how dairy fuels athletes and supports everyday health, proving once again that dairy is the ultimate teammate.

Working with influencers to drive trust for dairy

In 2025, Midwest Dairy partnered with online influencers across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to execute a hybrid campaign that blended experiential opportunities with an always-on educational strategy. The creators, Gen Z and parents with young children, highlighted the nutritional benefits of dairy, including lactose-free options, while showcasing how farmers across the Midwest prioritize cow care and comfort through sustainable, responsible practices.

The yearlong program reached 10.5 million video views, which exceeded the views goal by 798.9K. Nearly 205,000 engagements were tallied during the year, including 129,300 clicks to dairy resources. Midwest Dairy engaged influencers in the following campaigns:

- **‘Always On’ and seasonal recipes** – Throughout the year, this quarterly content showed dairy’s relevance by addressing consumers’ priorities and aligning with timely calendar opportunities. National Ice Cream Month, fall tailgating and holiday gatherings were occasions to celebrate with dairy and inspire dairy usage through recipes.
- **IN-fluencer Network and in-person gathering** – Midwest Dairy invited seven food and lifestyle influencers to Savor the Story: Farm, Food & Flavor, a thoughtfully curated gathering for education and engagement with registered dietitian thought leaders and Midwest Dairy staff. The experience included a visit to Krause Holsteins, which featured prominently in videos post-experience and were shared online during National Dairy Month. Network members went on to develop and share consistently through the remainder of the year, reminding their audiences about the dairy sustainability and animal care practices they witnessed.
- **Farm visits** – Five influencers each visited a nearby dairy farm, experiencing firsthand the care and dedication farmers put into their work and sharing it with their unique audiences during the fall season. The one-to-one approach aligns with Gen Z’s core values of authenticity and meaningful connection.
- **First 1,000 Days** – Midwest Dairy engaged eight influencers in the checkoff-created campaign to help parents understand how dairy can help nourish mother and infant brain health and cognition from conception to two years of age. The videos reached a diverse audience while maintaining authenticity and relatability through the research and resources shared.
- **Nuestros Sabores** – During Hispanic Heritage Month in October, three influencers elevated Dairy MAX’s vibrant and culturally rich influencer campaign centered around the launch of *Nuestros Sabores, Our Flavors* — a new digital cookbook created in partnership with Latinos and Hispanics in Dietetics and Nutrition (LAHIDAN).

Midwest Dairy supported each of its influencer campaigns with paid amplification across its 10-state area to target the audiences that matter most to dairy.

As Midwest Dairy looks to refine its approach to influencer content in 2026, you can expect to see more YouTube integrations and alignment of content amplification with the Midwest’s most populated consumer markets.



Sales

Key moments lead to big sales in 2025

In 2025, Midwest Dairy leaned into celebrating key moments with retail partners throughout the 10-state region. Backed by consumer insights and research, these key moments focused on dairy protein, lactose-free, celebrating local, and back-to-school/tailgating.

Key Moment 1: Dairy Strong

Research indicates that across generations – Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers – protein ranks as the number one important nutrient for health and wellness. 81% of consumers agree that “dairy is a good source of protein”.

Midwest Dairy partnered with Chicory, a third-party vendor, in January to enhance product sales and usage through digital recipe inspiration. The goal was to connect with consumers during their shopping journey by directing them to dairy-centric recipes that highlight protein-rich solutions.

Consumers searching for recipes with terms such as “protein-packed,” “healthy snacks,” or “yogurt” were directed to recipes featuring cottage cheese, milk (including lactose-free milk), and Greek yogurt. Walmart, Target, and Instacart were highlighted in the “Shop Now” section. All retailers experienced strong engagement, with click-through rates reaching the high end of Chicory’s benchmarks.

This activation with Chicory complemented other protein-themed retail events across the region, including Instacart, Jewel-Osco, Schnucks, and Fareway, boosting awareness of dairy’s protein benefits and helping to drive sales. The campaign generated nearly 5 million impressions and drove sales of over 3 million incremental pounds of milk across the 10-state region.

Key Moment 2: Lose the Lactose, Not the Taste

About one-third of consumers in the Midwest Dairy region say they have some form of dairy intolerance, sensitivity, or allergy, and more than half of moms don’t believe lactose-free milk counts as real milk. Together, these findings point to a strong opportunity to clarify misconceptions and drive growth in lactose-free dairy.

Midwest Dairy launched a pilot campaign in Chicago and St. Louis, in partnership with The Dairy Alliance, a fellow regional dairy checkoff serving the Southeast. The campaign had two goals: to raise awareness and boost sales. The first phase focused on consumer education through targeted social media ads that drove traffic to a new website, lactosefreedairy.info. Messaging acknowledged that dairy can cause discomfort for some but highlighted low- and lactose-free options. Ads received more than three million views, with more than 37,000 users clicking through to the website. Once there, about 17,000 consumers engaged with the content, with the majority exploring lactose-free recipes. To further expand reach, Midwest Dairy partnered with social influencers to develop and share lactose-free recipes, connecting with 173,000 more consumers across the 10-state region.

The second phase of the campaign focused on retail activation through the “Lose the Lactose, Not the Taste” message, encouraging consumers to learn more or shop now. During the five-week campaign, Midwest Dairy drove an incremental 161,592 pounds of milk sold. For a growing category like lactose-free milk, this increase met expectations for the target audience. Analytics showed that campaign messaging reached consumers approximately 4.5 million times, with website referrals coming from major food and recipe platforms, including Delish.com, Food.com, ThePioneerWoman.com, and FoodNetwork.com.

This pilot reframed consumer perceptions about lactose-free milk and delivered a measurable impact on awareness and sales. It’s a strong example of how strategic marketing and collaboration can grow promising categories within the dairy industry.

Key Moment 3: Love Dairy. Love Local.

Research shows that 51% say locally sourced foods are important, and 48% of consumers say “I would purchase more dairy if a local farm begins supplying dairy products to my usual store”. To promote that dairy is locally produced, Midwest Dairy worked with 14 retailers to connect with consumers through organic and paid social media, email blasts, banner ads, in-store ads, coupons, and more.

Midwest Dairy’s “Love Dairy. Love Local.” campaign activated across hundreds of Midwest retail locations during June Dairy Month, celebrating local farm families while driving measurable dairy demand. Retail partners including Hen House, UNFI-affiliated stores, Dierbergs, Fareway, Coborn’s, and Price Chopper delivered strong visibility through recipes, digital ads, email promotions, influencer content, and in-store signage. These efforts generated millions of consumer impressions, including 381,000 at Hen House, 1.5 million through UNFI retailers, and 4.8 million through Fareway’s integrated campaign. Engagement was strong across channels, reinforcing consumer interest in local dairy stories and everyday dairy inspiration.

The June activations also delivered significant sales impact. Dierbergs’ rewards-based dairy promotions drove more than 144,000 incremental pounds of milk sold, while Coborn’s farm-to-fridge storytelling generated over 330,000 incremental pounds. Price Chopper’s family-focused recipe campaigns added another 70,000 incremental pounds. Collectively, these efforts demonstrated the power of pairing local farmer stories with seasonal food inspiration, strengthening consumer trust and driving dairy purchases across the region.

Key Moment 4: Back to School and Tailgating

As summer ends, parents and sports fans are looking for quick, easy, delicious, and nutritious snack options that are portable and affordable. Research shows that snacking is on the rise, and dairy products like string cheese, single-serve dairy beverages, and shredded, sliced, and cubed cheese are the perfect solutions to meet consumer needs. Cross-promotions with complementary products, such as chips for cheesy dips or crunchy granola for yogurt, further strengthened this key moment.

Midwest Dairy capitalized on the back-to-school and tailgating seasons to drive strong dairy demand across its 10-state region. Partnerships with major retailers such as Cub Foods, Hy-Vee, Schnucks, Kroger, Jewel, Fareway, and Price Chopper delivered broad visibility for dairy through

digital ads, in-store signage, shoppable recipes, and seasonal content. These efforts generated millions of impressions, including more than 500,000 from Cub Foods and over 3 million from Hy-Vee, while driving more than \$195,000 in incremental dairy sales and over 551,000 incremental pounds of milk sold at Hy-Vee alone.

Strategic vendor partnerships further amplified reach and converted engagement into measurable sales. Chicory's recipe-driven platform delivered 4.6 million impressions, more than 57,000 clicks, and over 5 million incremental pounds of milk sold. Neptune Retail Solutions' cheese-aisle signage in 896 stores generated more than 1.5 million incremental pounds of milk sold, while Instacart campaigns added 3.3 million impressions, 94,000 clicks, and an \$18.30 return on ad spend. Together, these seasonal campaigns delivered strong returns for Midwest dairy farmers by keeping dairy top-of-mind during two of the year's most influential shopping periods.

Scooter's partnership boosts dairy in iced drinks

In 2025, Midwest Dairy launched a new partnership with Scooter's Coffee, a fast-growing drive-thru brand known for its friendly service, customizable drinks, and focus on speed and convenience. Many of Scooter's menu items are made with real dairy, making the brand a natural fit for a collaboration focused on driving dairy use in beverages consumers already love.

This fall, the partnership focused on better understanding customer interest in cold foam and encouraging more people to try it. Cold foam is a whipped dairy topping added to iced drinks that creates a smooth, velvety layer of creaminess without fully mixing into the beverage. Its popularity continues to grow because it adds flavor, protein, and a premium feel to iced coffee and specialty drinks.

A Limited-Time Offer to Drive Trial

From October 20-24, 2025, Scooter's Coffee offered a free cold foam upgrade on any large drink at 10 locations within Midwest Dairy's territory. The promotion invited customers to experience cold foam made with real dairy while enhancing their favorite iced beverages.

The goal was twofold: encourage customers to try cold foam and encourage upgrades from medium to large drinks by highlighting the added value of a dairy-based topping.

Strong Visibility and Engagement

Each participating location received banners, yard signs, and window signage to promote the offer. The promotion was also supported with social media content in local markets, helping extend awareness beyond the drive-thru lane.

In just nine days, the campaign delivered strong digital results with 2,966,586 in reach and 6,258,598 impressions, impressing Scooter's Coffee leadership and confirming interest in dairy-forward beverage innovation.

Measurable Sales Impact

Key performance indicators focused on changes in large drink and cold foam sales before, during, and after the promotion. Results showed:

- Cold foam units sold increased by 60% during the promotion.
- Large drink units sold increased by 8%, suggesting many customers added cold foam when it was offered.

The data also revealed opportunities to better communicate the benefits of protein-based cold foam options in future promotions.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Midwest Dairy and Scooter's Coffee are now using these insights to shape future promotions and explore additional dairy-forward beverage innovation in 2026. Partnerships like this show how dairy can elevate everyday menu items while driving real demand for dairy farm families.

Seasonal dairy flavors finish strong at Kwik Trip

Midwest Dairy and Kwik Trip/Kwik Star wrapped up their 2025 partnership with two final limited-time offers that kept dairy front and center during the winter season: Egg Nog milk pints and Snow Mint ice cream. These seasonal flavors continued Kwik Trip's strategy of using innovation and taste to excite shoppers and drive demand for real dairy.

According to Mintel research, taste is the number one driver of food and beverage choices, and Kwik Trip's rotating lineup of flavored milk and ice cream delivers on what consumers want most. Offering flavors for a limited time helps create urgency and keeps shoppers coming back to see what's new in the dairy case.

Seasonal Flavors Get Big In-Store Visibility

Both products were supported with strong in-store promotion to ensure shoppers saw and heard about the new flavors during every visit.

For Egg Nog milk, Midwest Dairy supported in-store cooler decals and digital video displays. These efforts resulted in 10,018,514 digital display plays and drove sales of just over 200,000 incremental pounds of milk.

For Snowmint ice cream, support included in-store radio ads, digital video displays, and cooler decals. This promotion delivered 946,689 in-store radio plays, more than 9.8 million digital display plays, and generated over 160,000 incremental pounds of milk.

Together, these two winter flavors kept dairy top of mind at the end of the year while reinforcing Kwik Trip's reputation for creative, high-quality dairy products.

A Strong Finish to a Big Year for Dairy

These final two limited-time offers capped off a successful yearlong partnership. In total, Midwest Dairy supported nine limited-time milk and ice cream products at Kwik Trip/Kwik Star in 2025, including Triple Chocolate Fudge Ice Cream, Orange Dreamsicle Milk, and Banana Milk, among others. Across all flavors, the partnership drove more than 1.8 million incremental pounds of milk.

This approach shows how innovation, strategic promotion, and strong retail partnerships can turn new flavors into real demand for dairy farm families.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Plans are already underway to continue this successful partnership in 2026, with more creative flavors and high-visibility promotions that keep dairy exciting for consumers and valuable for farmers.

Driving dairy sales through the holiday season

Midwest Dairy partnered with both Dierbergs and Hy-Vee to engage consumers through dairy-focused activations in October and December 2025. The campaigns combined in-store promotions, social media, and email marketing to drive both engagement and sales growth. Together, the initiatives generated tens of thousands of incremental pounds of milk sold, showcasing how strategic retail partnerships can translate into real impact for Midwest dairy farmers.

Dierbergs

National Farmers Day

Midwest Dairy partnered with Dierbergs to celebrate National Farmers Day, celebrated on October 12. Research shows that shoppers are interested in increasing protein consumption and are also very interested in understanding where their food comes from. Midwest Dairy shared those insights with Dierbergs, who worked with their marketing and recipe development team to create a Cheesy Skillet Lasagna recipe featuring cottage cheese. This allowed Dierbergs to showcase innovation through recipes and drive sales. To support the recipe, Dierbergs ran promotional pricing and bonus points offers on cottage cheese and cheese. Included in the campaign were a digital ad panel in Dierbergs' weekly ad and social posts promoting the recipe and bonus points offers.

The recipe drove over 2,500 views on social media and was the third most clicked item in the email. Using consumer insights to develop new recipes encouraged Dierbergs' customers to try new things. The campaign resulted in 77,557 incremental pounds of milk sold.

Holiday Baking

Planning for the holiday activation centered on understanding Dierbergs' customers and identifying growth opportunities. Butter emerged as a key area of innovation, with Dierbergs experiencing strong sales growth in the category. Based on these insights, the December campaign strategically focused on holiday baking to drive dairy demand.

Dierbergs developed a Cranberry Almond Bundt Cake recipe, which included milk and butter. Reward signage in-store, social media posts, email, and digital weekly circular inclusion with dairy messaging were all tactics used to promote the campaign.

The recipe drove over 2,600 impressions on social media and 977 ad page views. Dierbergs recorded 114% year-over-year growth in butter sales and a 3% lift in milk gallons. The campaign resulted in almost 75,000 incremental pounds of milk sold.

Hy-Vee

Making Memories with Dairy

This past holiday season, dairy took center stage at Hy-Vee as families gathered to bake, cook, and celebrate together. Through a festive "Making Memories with Dairy" campaign, Hy-Vee showcased its private label butter, creams, cottage cheese, and sour cream in comforting holiday recipes that brought both flavor and value to shoppers' tables.

From November 23 through December 30, the campaign generated 767,952 measurable impressions across on-site and email placements and, when combined with added online banner support, reached a total of 816,972 impressions during the holiday season. Even more importantly, these efforts drove an incredible 4,586,644 incremental pounds of milk sales, directly supporting dairy demand during one of the most important consumption seasons of the year.

Hy-Vee's seasonal email alone delivered an impressive 11.77% conversion rate – dramatically outperforming the industry benchmark of 0.73%–1.32%. It achieved a 54.5% open rate and generated a \$35.61 return on ad spending. In other words, shoppers weren't just seeing the message – they were opening, engaging, and buying.

On-site banner placements were equally impactful, driving a 2.36% conversion rate compared to the benchmark range of 0.097%–2.13%. Together, these results proved that dairy-inspired recipe content successfully translated into real purchases – both online and in-store.

The campaign aligned with consumer insights, reflecting Mintel's top two food and beverage drivers: taste and price. Holiday recipes highlighted the rich flavor and versatility of real dairy while promoting trusted Hy-Vee private label products that deliver strong value for today's budget-conscious families. During a season when shoppers balance tradition with affordability, dairy delivered on both.

Because of local dairy farmers' dedication to producing high-quality milk, families across the Midwest were able to create memorable holiday meals filled with flavor, comfort, and connection.

These campaigns are a powerful example of how strategic retail partnerships, strong insights, and compelling recipe inspiration can translate directly into increased dairy sales and measurable impact back to the farm.



Research

Dairy is meeting the moment with today's consumers

Dairy is in a strong position with today's consumers, and the momentum is real. At a time when shoppers are watching their budgets more closely and paying closer attention to what they eat, dairy continues to deliver on what matters most: taste, nutrition, and everyday practicality.

Consumer research shows that people want foods that are affordable, enjoyable, and easy to use, while still supporting their health goals. Midwest Dairy works with Mintel and Circana, both premier market research firms that track consumer behavior.

Data Shows Consumers Love Dairy

According to Mintel, these priorities are shaping how shoppers think about sustainability and value. Dairy checks all three boxes, and consumers recognize it.

In fact, Midwest Dairy's own research shows strong agreement among consumers across our 10-state region. Nearly nine in 10 say they love dairy, and more than 70% view dairy as an affordable option for their families. Even more important, consumers associate dairy with health and nutrition: 84% say dairy is nutritious, 82% recognize it as a good source of protein, and 88% say they regularly cook and bake with dairy at home.

That confidence is showing up at the store. According to Circana, dairy volume growth in 2025 was driven by value-added products that align with evolving needs, particularly high-protein and lactose-free options. Lactose-free milk grew more than 7%, yogurt nearly 9%, and cottage cheese posted standout growth of almost 15%. Even familiar staples like butter, natural cheese, and cream continue to grow, reinforcing dairy's relevance across meals and occasions.

Challenges for Dairy

That said, the picture isn't without challenges. Midwest Dairy research shows that some consumers remain uncertain about dairy's sustainability practices. Just over half agree that dairy products are environmentally friendly or come from cows that are treated humanely. Perceived sensitivities, especially among younger consumers like Gen Z, also continue to influence purchasing decisions. While dairy sales still far outpace alternatives, some shoppers turn to substitutes due to perceived digestibility or environmental concerns.

Milk consumption remains a pressure point, down slightly in 2025, and broader headwinds such as potential changes to dietary guidelines, inflation, tariffs, and job market uncertainty could affect future demand.

Despite the potential challenges, the opportunity ahead is clear: consumers already value dairy for what it delivers. By continuing to share how dairy is produced, how farmers care for their animals and land, and how dairy fits into modern lifestyles, we can build trust, address misconceptions, and keep dairy growing with the next generation and beyond.

Checkoff-funded science moving dairy forward

For Midwest dairy farmers, every checkoff dollar is an investment in the future of dairy. In 2025, the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center (MDFRC) delivered meaningful returns on that investment, helping processors solve real-world challenges, improving product quality and safety, and opening new opportunities for dairy growth at home and abroad.

MDFRC is a partnership among six leading universities, including the University of Minnesota, Iowa State University, South Dakota State University, University of Missouri, Kansas State University, and University of Nebraska–Lincoln, with over 14 professors working on dairy research. Together, they work on behalf of farmers to keep dairy competitive, innovative, and in demand.

Driving Research That Moves the Needle

The center's mission is simple: to deliver research and education that benefits consumers and fuels a strong market for Midwest Dairy. MDFRC focuses its strategy on two key opportunities:

Consumer Solutions

- Developing dairy ingredients that support modern wellness trends such as immunity, digestive health, and energy.
- Researching milk components to improve consumer experience through higher protein, healthy fats, clean labels, and reduced sugar.
- Exploring packaging, sensors, and food safety innovations for e-commerce dairy products.
- Educating consumers about dairy's sustainability and nutritional benefits.
- Strategies to understand and enhance bioavailability of nutrients in dairy products.

Industry Solutions

- Enable cheese and dairy ingredients exports (product and process interventions, shelf life, quality, and functionality)
- Improve dairy ingredients and permeates powder quality, safety, and functionality
- New platforms and untapped market for dairy
- Upcycling dairy co-products
- Analytical tools and testing methods to measure and predict the quality and safety of products/ingredients
- Novel and scalable technologies to improve microbial quality and safety of dairy products and ingredients
- Optimize water and energy usage and wastewater management.

Real-World Wins for Dairy Farmers and Processors

Dr. Prafulla Salunke of South Dakota State University shared several examples of how MDFRC research is paying off:

- **Clean-label processed cheese:** MDFRC research helped processors reformulate processed cheese products to remove unwanted ingredients. Those clean-label products

are now on the market, giving dairy a stronger position with today's label-conscious consumers.

- **Higher-protein dairy beverages:** Many processors struggle to exceed 18% protein in drinks. MDFRC researchers helped one company develop a 25% protein Greek yogurt beverage, which launched just months after trials at SDSU. As consumer interest in protein grows—especially with the rise of GLP-1 medications—this work positions dairy to meet that demand.
- **Support for small and on-farm processors:** Workshops across the region—cheese technology at SDSU, pasteurization at UMN, and microbiology at ISU—helped smaller processors improve safety, quality, and efficiency.

These are the kinds of practical, farmer-focused outcomes that checkoff-funded research makes possible.

Collaboration That Keeps Dairy Moving Forward

In 2025, MDFRC hosted its Spring Planning Meeting and Annual Meeting, bringing together researchers, dairy farmers, students, processors, and Midwest Dairy staff to identify industry challenges and review new research proposals. This process ensures farmer-funded research focuses on real challenges facing dairy processors and the marketplace.

MDFRC scientists also presented at the Global Ingredients Summit, putting farmer-funded research on an international stage and strengthening dairy's reputation for innovation.

Looking Ahead

With new projects underway and growing engagement from processors and students, MDFRC is well-positioned to continue delivering value back to Midwest dairy farmers. Investments from checkoff fuel research that keeps dairy competitive, opens new markets, and ensures processors have the tools they need to innovate. The work happening today will shape the dairy products consumers buy tomorrow, creating new demand for milk and new opportunities for Midwest dairy farmers.

South Dakota Dairy Ambassador couples promotion with research

Vaishali Poswal is a graduate student in the Dairy and Food Science Department at South Dakota State University (SDSU), where she is pursuing a Master of Science degree. In addition to her academic work, she gains hands-on experience at the Davis Dairy Plant on campus and serves as a dedicated advocate for the dairy industry.

As a Dairy Ambassador, Vaishali has played an active role in nearly every promotional event this year. She volunteered at the Midwest Dairy exhibit during the Central Plains Dairy Expo, supported National Dairy Month activities such as Dairy Fest and the annual Day on the Farm open house, and represented dairy at several South Dakota fairs. At these events, she engaged with youth in educational centers, sparking curiosity and conversations about dairy.

In addition to her promotional work, Vaishali conducts research under the supervision of Dr. Sanjeev Anand at SDSU. Her current project, funded through support from the Midwest Dairy Food Research Center (MDFRC), focuses on *Listeria monocytogenes*, an ongoing challenge in dairy processing. The research explores how *Listeria* survives in processing environments, interacts with other microorganisms, and leads to cross-contamination even after pasteurization. Combining laboratory studies with advanced genomic tools, Vaishali and her team aim to develop better control strategies to reduce risks, strengthen safety protocols, and reinforce consumer confidence in dairy products.

Vaishali's work offers a unique "two-for-one" benefit for dairy farmers. On one hand, she helps promote dairy as a safe, nutritious, and delicious food through her role as an ambassador. On the other hand, she contributes to groundbreaking research that directly impacts processors and farmers by helping to prevent costly recalls and ensuring stronger food safety practices.

"As part of my graduate studies at SDSU, I am researching the control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in the dairy processing environment under the supervision of Prof. (Dr.) Sanjeev Anand. Despite rigorous cleaning and sanitation, *Listeria* can persist in facilities and contaminate finished products, leading to costly recalls and a loss of consumer trust," said Vaishali. "Our project focuses on how *Listeria* survives and interacts with other microorganisms. While pasteurization eliminates *Listeria* in milk, post-pasteurization cross-contamination is a significant concern. The outcomes of this research will benefit both processors and farmers, as well as support broader efforts to manage foodborne pathogens across the dairy supply chain."

Vaishali is proud to combine her passion for dairy promotion with her commitment to advancing science-based solutions for the industry. She credits support from Dairy Management Inc. and the SDSU Dairy and Food Science Department for making her research possible. Her journey reflects the future of the dairy industry, driven by both innovation and advocacy, ensuring that consumers continue to see dairy as safe, sustainable, and essential.

Convenience meets function: RoseBud Ice Cream and Zoguri named winners in Midwest Dairy's Future of Dairy Innovation Accelerator Pitch Event

Two Midwest startups were crowned winners of the Midwest Dairy Accelerator pitch event yesterday, earning \$30,000 in prize funding to help scale their dairy-based innovations. RoseBud Ice Cream took home the \$20,000 grand prize and an in-kind consulting package from Queue Brand Communications worth \$10,000, while Zoguri was awarded \$10,000 as runner-up, following a live pitch competition at The Hatchery, a past Midwest Dairy partner and nonprofit food and beverage business incubator in Chicago.

The event marked the finale of the Midwest Dairy Accelerator, an intensive eight-week program launched this summer by Midwest Dairy in partnership with innovation advisory firm VentureFuel. Designed to accelerate the next generation of dairy-forward entrepreneurs, the program provided mentorship, industry connections, and resources to help startups grow innovative businesses with real dairy at the core. The participating companies in this program and the September 3 pitch event included Lorenzo's Frozen Pudding of Chicago, IL; RoseBud Ice Cream of Glen Ellyn, IL; Sugarwitch of St. Louis, MO; and Zoguri of Omaha, NE.

Throughout the program, founders participated in workshops and one-on-one sessions with experts across the dairy value chain, including Associated Milk Producers Inc., Agropur, Iowa State University, and the U.S. Dairy Export Council. The curriculum covered topics such as consumer insights, ingredients and innovation, co-packing and manufacturing, distribution and retail, marketing and pitching.

Final pitches were evaluated by a panel of industry experts, including Brigette Wolf, CMO, My/Mochi; Cameron Lee, Senior Manager of Brand Partnerships, Instacart; Jill Houk, R&D Chef, Culinary Culture; Ross Vangalis, CEO and Founder, Queue Brand Communications; and Silvia Robles, VP Growth Platforms & Partnerships, Dairy Management Inc..

RoseBud Ice Cream, a Glen Ellyn, IL-based brand bringing ice cream in convenient, kid-friendly pouches, plans to use the prize money to strengthen operations and scale. "I'll be using the prize money to make a switch to a new pouch supplier and manufacturer, and I can already tell the networking connections are going to pay off dividends to know these people as we continue to grow," said Sam Rose, founder and chief cream officer.

Winning the competition was a milestone moment for the company. "It feels great to be a winner," Rose added. Beyond the funding, RoseBud reflected on the broader impact of the accelerator. "Being part of this cohort has shaped my perspective on dairy innovation by illuminating a lot of things when it comes to dairy. I did not realize how much of a superfood dairy is — it's been pretty crazy to see and gives me a lot of ideas for how we can further iterate products in the future."

Runner-up Zoguri, based in Omaha, NE, develops fermented dairy supplements featuring a proprietary *L. reuteri* probiotic strain. For the company, the recognition itself was deeply meaningful. "The recognition by Midwest Dairy is incredible and helps us reaffirm our mission to improve the health of others through fermented dairy and using an *L. reuteri* strain of probiotic."

The prize money will also directly support the brand's next stage of growth. "The prize money is going to help us revolutionize what we're doing with our packaging," said Daniel Rehal, president and founder.

For Midwest Dairy, the Accelerator is more than a one-time event; it's a strategic investment in the future of dairy demand. "Dairy farmers have always been innovators, finding new ways to bring nutritious products to market and meet the changing needs of consumers," said Beth Bruck-Upton, vice president of research and innovation at Midwest Dairy. "Today, that same spirit of innovation drives us to support emerging brands by providing the mentorship and resources they need to grow and succeed."

Midwest Dairy's commitment to innovation is fueling the continued evolution of dairy in the U.S., with research and pilot initiatives advancing economic, environmental, and social sustainability. The Midwest Dairy Accelerator extends this commitment by helping early-stage entrepreneurs meet rising consumer demand for dairy-based products that deliver on flavor, function, and convenience. By transforming years of smaller pitch events into a full accelerator, Midwest Dairy has created a scalable model for nurturing innovation that benefits both entrepreneurs and dairy farmers. The program demonstrates how checkoff dollars are working to connect the dots between farm-level production and market-level innovation, ensuring that dairy continues to hold a meaningful place in consumers' lives.

"The ingenuity and commitment we've seen from RoseBud Ice Cream and Zoguri showcase exactly what it takes to turn bold ideas into real-world impact," said Fred Schonenberg, CEO of VentureFuel. "This is not innovation for innovation's sake—it's about commercializing breakthrough concepts to meet consumers where they are today and where they're headed tomorrow. We're proud to partner with Midwest Dairy to help bring these exciting innovations from vision to market to accelerate what's next in dairy."

For more information on the program and this year's winners, visit MidwestDairyAccelerator.com.



Developing Leaders

29 Dairy Ambassadors and Princesses Advocate for Dairy in 2025

Midwest Dairy supports the next generation of dairy leaders through a variety of programs, scholarships, and internships that help pave the way for their continued success in the dairy industry. Opportunities such as the Dairy Ambassador and Dairy Princess programs help young dairy leaders develop their communication skills, network with industry professionals, and advocate for dairy farmers in their respective states.

In addition to participating in consumer engagement events, Dairy Ambassadors and Dairy Princesses had several opportunities to advance their professional development through in-person and virtual training sessions. Many attended the regional in-person Ambassador Gathering, where they networked with peers from across the region, sharpened their communication skills, and deepened their networking and professional development skills.

At the end of their respective programs, Dairy Ambassadors and Dairy Princesses are eligible for scholarships to support their continuing education goals.

Dairy Ambassadors

Illinois

Elsie Sizemore, Amanda Kistingner, and Shayden Hogg proudly served as Illinois's 2025 Dairy Ambassadors, representing dairy farm families across the state and strengthening consumer trust in dairy. Collectively, the ambassadors reached thousands of consumers in 2025. They connected with 8,000 Chicago Wolves fans during the Illinois Farm Families hockey game, engaged 1,000 attendees at the Kilgus Farmstead Breakfast on the Farm, and engaged with 1,200 visitors across Marcoot Jersey Creamery's Cheese Fest and Fall Fest events. In addition, Shayden Hogg brought dairy directly into classrooms, reaching over 400 students through educational visits. They also reached thousands of consumers by engaging with Illinois State Fair goers in the Cozy Cow Lounge in the Dairy Building.

Iowa

Annika Brynsaas, Elise Church, Haily Backer, Kerigan Alexander, and Allison Joos served as Iowa's Dairy Ambassadors in 2025. Throughout the year, they attended a combination of events focused on reaching consumers and developing their leadership skills in the dairy industry. Ambassadors attended on-farm and community events, such as the Marshall County Dairy Day Camp and the Iowa Eats Festival in Waterloo, to engage with consumers and share dairy's story. National Dairy Month was an exceptionally busy month as the Ambassadors traveled across the state, bringing education and enthusiasm to consumer events from Alton to Burlington, Iowa!

Minnesota

In 2025, Avery Rieland, Shelby Swanson, Brady Gille, Alexis Hoefs, and Allison Foss served as Minnesota Dairy Ambassadors, spending the year developing their leadership skills, interacting with consumers, and building trust in dairy. Their first events of the year were impactful conversations with attendees at the University of Minnesota men's hockey games. Throughout the spring and summer, the Ambassadors engaged with consumers at a variety of events to help

tell dairy's story, including Goldy's Run, Milk Run, and Breakfast on the Farm events throughout the state.

Nebraska

Nebraska was well represented by dairy ambassadors in 2025, including Jenna Albers, Clara Bates, Shaylee Heidtbrink, Joslyn Hochstein, Brianna Klabenes, Eliza Lange, Jenna Muntz, Ava Noecker, Emily (Rempel) Ostdiek, and Brylee Ross. In addition to professional development opportunities, Dairy Ambassadors attended key events, such as the Nebraska State Dairy Convention and the Nebraska State Fair Exhibitor Reception. Additionally, the ambassadors advocated for the dairy industry at a variety of consumer-focused events, such as festivals, the June Dairy Month Proclamation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Husker and Campus Recreation partnership events, the UNL College of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources (CASNR) UNL CASNR staff and student Ice Cream Appreciation, and by representing the program on Pure Nebraska. In total, the Nebraska Dairy Ambassadors took part in nearly 60 event activations and leadership opportunities in 2025.

South Dakota

South Dakota's 2025 Dairy Ambassadors Anna Johnson, Olivia Bork, Saloni Chauhan, and Vaishali Poswal enjoyed a year filled with learning, connection, and dairy outreach. While Ambassadors attended a variety of events throughout the state, the year's biggest impact came from their participation in dairy open houses and county fairs, where they spoke with visitors eager to learn more about the dairy industry. Ambassadors consistently described these conversations as inspiring and rewarding. They also quickly realized just how many people are unfamiliar or misinformed about how dairy cows are cared for and how dairy products are produced, which made their educational role feel even more meaningful. Helping event attendees and fairgoers build confidence and understanding about dairy made ambassadors feel they were making a genuine difference. Additionally, South Dakota Dairy Ambassadors attended the Central Plains Dairy Expo, gaining valuable insight into the wide range of dairy businesses across the Midwest while honing their networking skills.

Dairy Princesses

Iowa

The 71st Iowa Dairy Princess, Haley Ronnebaum, and Iowa Dairy Princess Alternate, Harley Baumler, were busy traveling across the state serving as goodwill ambassadors for Iowa's dairy farmers. They attended several on-farm events and open houses, public events and festivals, library visits, TV and radio interviews, and more. Haley and Harley also played an integral part in the Iowa Dairy Princess June Event, which served as a dairy communications workshop and orientation for county and breed dairy princesses, drawing nearly 20 high school and college students passionate about dairy promotion. They concluded their reign at the end of the Iowa State Fair. Together, Haley and Harley traveled more than 6,000 miles, making over 75 appearances and reaching tens of thousands of consumers in person and on social media across the state.

On August 6, 2025, Kelsey Timp was crowned the 72nd Iowa Dairy Princess, and Alia Domeyer was crowned the Iowa Dairy Princess Alternate. Follow along with their journeys on Facebook and Instagram.

Minnesota

The 71st Princess Kay of the Milky Way, Rachel Visser, was busy traveling across the state of Minnesota, serving as the Goodwill Ambassador for Minnesota's dairy farmers while building trust in dairy among consumers. Rachel is from Hutchinson, Minnesota, in McLeod County, and is the daughter of Barry and Shannon Visser, and attends the University of Minnesota. Rachel was crowned Princess Kay of the Milky Way on August 21, 2024, and during her yearlong reign, Rachel traveled over 8,000 miles, making 90 appearances, including at parades, community celebrations, industry meetings, county fairs, and visiting schools across the state. Her busiest month was June, when she attended farm events across the state to celebrate National Dairy Month.

On August 20, 2025, the 72nd Princess Kay of the Milky Way, Malorie Thorson, was crowned. Follow along with her adventures on Facebook and Instagram.

Undeniably Dairy Grants bring dairy to life

Midwest Dairy supports dairy farmers, dairy groups, and agricultural organizations with Undeniably Dairy Grants that help bring great local dairy promotion ideas to life. These grants help bring dairy to consumers, from on-farm events to local events that attract a global audience. In 2025, Midwest Dairy awarded over \$355,000 to 136 grants in total. Learn more about some successful, creative events, supported by Undeniably Dairy Grants, that took place in 2025!

Bohnert Birthing Barn – Calf Corner (Illinois)

Connecting with consumers in urban areas can be challenging, but dairy farmer Tara Bohnert of Bohnert Jerseys was not deterred. She connected with consumers at the Rock Island County Fair, held in a bustling metropolitan area with a population of about 474,000. With support from an Undeniably Dairy grant, Bohnert welcomed visitors of all ages to the Bohnert Birthing Barn – Calf Corner to see a baby calf be born. In addition to learning about cow and calf care, visitors explored the role dairy farms play in the ecosystem and discovered the nutritional benefits of milk through printed materials, looping videos, and engaging games. This event reached an estimated 10,000 consumers!

Granville RAGBRAI (Iowa)

Each year, thousands of cyclists head to Iowa for the world's oldest, largest, and longest recreational bicycle touring event – the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI). In 2025, nearly 19,000 cyclists from all 50 states and 20 countries participated, riding 406 miles from western to eastern Iowa. Dairy farmer Christina Zuiderveen of Black Soil Dairy brought dairy to RAGBRAI. Located only three miles from RAGBRAI's first breakfast stop, it was a natural decision to host a Milk and Cereal Bar to showcase dairy nutrition to athletes and fans. In addition to enjoying a refreshing breakfast, campaign materials highlighted dairy nutrition facts, including that milk hydrates better than water. Zuiderveen connected directly with attendees, sharing her dairy story both in person and in media interviews. This event reached an estimated 15,000 consumers!

June Dairy Month Open House (Kansas)

A fantastic way to celebrate June Dairy Month is by hosting an open house. Ashley Holle of StateLine Dairy used an Undeniably Dairy grant to help promote their on-farm open house, featuring a tour of their robotic dairy. More than 200 visitors attended, some traveling over an hour, to learn about StateLine Dairy's robotic milking process, feed types, and sustainability practices. They also learned about life on a dairy farm and went home with goody bags with Undeniably Dairy swag and other dairy-related materials.

Roots to Roundtable (Minnesota)

Partnering with other commodities is one unique way to showcase the power of agriculture in local communities. Dairy farmer Jean Annexstad of Annexstad Dairy Farms collaborated with local farms and agriculture groups for a tour and farm-to-table dinner event, inviting 55 community influencers to learn about Nicollet County's agriculture story. The event kicked off with a welcome from Princess Kay, Rachel Visser. Participants then toured several farms by

charter bus, learning about the agriculture industry's commitment to sustainability and the farming practices that protect their land for future generations.

The event concluded with a farm-to-table dinner prepared by Chef Adam Steward of Gustavus Adolphus College, featuring all locally sourced ingredients. By connecting community influencers directly to local producers, including dairy farmers, this event strengthened trust in agriculture.

Fremont 4-H Pancake Feed and Dairy Show (Nebraska)

In addition to Undeniably Dairy Grants, Midwest Dairy also offers dairy farmers promotional materials through the Promo Center. Jen Hilgenkamp of Hilgenkamp Farms took advantage of both resources to share dairy with attendees of the Fremont 4-H Pancake Feed and Dairy Show. Attendees learned about dairy nutrition, dairy cow breeds, how milk gets from cow to cup, and sustainable farming practices. Attendees also took home coloring books, Croc charms, cow hats, and other fun materials that helped bring dairy's story to life! This event reached an estimated 175 consumers.

Dairy Fest (South Dakota)

Dairy Fest is an annual three-day event that brings the community together through conversation and learning opportunities about the dairy industry in a celebratory atmosphere. To help bring it to life, Nicolien Hammink of Hammink Dairy utilized an Undeniably Dairy Grant. This free, family-friendly event educates consumers about the entire dairy industry, from farm to table, highlighting its commitment to sustainability and the wholesome nutrition of dairy. In addition to fun activities like a "Picowsa Art Contest," farm and plant tours, and kids' games, Dairy Fest also featured a "Got-Milk Gala." Key community influencers were invited to the gala, where they interacted with dairy producers and industry representatives while enjoying a delicious dairy-based meal and learning about the industry. This event reached an estimated 1,400 consumers!

An Undeniably Dairy Grant can help bring great dairy promotions, events, and activities to life. Dairy farmers who contribute to the Midwest Dairy checkoff, organized dairy groups, and agriculture organizations in the 10-state region can apply for up to \$5,000 in one calendar year. There are three funding cycles per year – March 1, May 1, and Aug. 1. To learn more about Undeniably Dairy Grants, visit www.MidwestDairy.com/UDGrants.

17 farmers graduate from Class 3 of the DEAL Program

Earlier this summer, 17 farmers graduated from Class 3 of Midwest Dairy's Dairy Experience and Agricultural Leadership (DEAL) Program. The final phase brought DEAL members to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for a two-day event focused on Midwest Dairy leadership and media training.

On day one, DEAL members participated in the corporate board meeting. Following the meeting, DEAL members had the opportunity to network with corporate board members at dinner. The next day, DEAL members participated in media training facilitated by Padilla, Midwest Dairy's corporate communications partner. They shared tips, techniques, and best practices for handling media interviews. Afterward, DEAL members practiced their new skills through mock newspaper and TV interviews. The event concluded with a presentation from Aaron Putze, Chief Officer of Strategy and Brand Management for the Iowa Soybean Association, on the power of relationships.

Dairy farmers in DEAL Class 3 provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about their experience. One farmer said, "I think that DEAL has given a broader perspective for the ways that checkoff dollars are being used." Another farmer commented, "I really enjoyed not only meeting other young dairy farmers across the Midwest and southeast regions while becoming friends with them but also meeting so many strong leaders within agriculture."

Midwest Dairy is looking forward to DEAL Class 4 kicking off in February 2026. As in Class 3, dairy farmers from Midwest Dairy and the Dairy Alliance will attend Phase 1 of the program to learn about their personality strengths and how to use them when working with others. They will also take a deeper dive into the dairy checkoff and spend time together networking and building relationships.

Congratulations to the graduates of DEAL Class 3. Their curiosity, drive, and enthusiasm for the dairy industry are inspirational. Midwest Dairy is excited to watch their journey unfold as they step into leadership and advocacy roles that will shape the future of dairy. The energy, dedication, and time invested in this program will serve them well!

- Amber Selman, IA
- Jennifer Bronner, IA
- Katherine Boelen, IA
- Kendra Holland, IL
- Amanda Zigan, MN
- Brittany Moorse, MN
- Cole Hoscheit, MN
- Elizabeth Golombiecki, MN
- Kevin Korbel, MN
- Quinci Schmidt, MN
- Jess Wohler, KS
- Todd Pauly, KS
- Aaron Stewart, MO
- Nicolas Dotson, NO
- Allison LaHaie, NE
- Caden Cowherd, KY
- Rachel Gray, NC

Lasso grants fuel on-farm innovation

In 2024, Midwest Dairy launched a free grant writing support program for on-farm projects in partnership with Lasso. Often described as a “grant writer in a box,” Lasso helps farmers identify, apply for, and manage grant opportunities that support their operations. Acting as a grant-writing handyman, the Lasso team provides hands-on support at every step of the process. To participate, farmers must be open to pursuing grants, have a defined project in mind with potential installers, vendors, or service providers identified, and be willing to serve as a case study for Midwest Dairy. With more funding available than ever to support sustainable businesses—and many dairy farmers eligible—this program is opening new doors across the 10-state region.

Kevin Knapp (IA)

Knapp Time Dairy, owned by Kevin and Cari Knapp, is located in northwest Iowa. The dairy is planning a major expansion to improve efficiency and transition its farm to the next generation. The Knapps aim to expand and modernize their dairy by transitioning from a tie-stall barn and installing five Lely A5 Robots in a free-stall barn. The robots will milk 320 cows, with the remainder of the herd milked in the tie-stall barn, for a total of 450 cows. Their current milking routine is labor-intensive, and the new system will significantly reduce labor demands, enhance cow comfort, increase milk production, and lower physical strain on workers.

The size and scope of this project were overwhelming, but when Kevin read about available grants through the Iowa State Dairy Association and Midwest Dairy, the opportunity caught his attention. In 2025, they seized the opportunity to collaborate with Midwest Dairy partner Lasso, which made a significant difference. Lasso’s clear structure, professional guidance, and reassurance helped them move forward with confidence. In the end, the Knapps worked with Lasso to prepare a grant application for the Choose Iowa Dairy Grant. Grant funding allowed Knapp Time Dairy to complete a transformative expansion that reduces labor, improves cow comfort, and positions their family farm for the next generation.

Piet van Bedaf (ND)

VanBedaf’s Dairy, a North Dakota-based family dairy, produces high-quality A2A2 milk. With growing demand for A2A2 dairy products and increased milk throughput needs, the farm sought to upgrade its milk storage and cooling infrastructure. Their goal was to support market growth, improve sustainability, and build long-term operations by capturing energy savings. By securing grant funding, the dairy could invest in infrastructure improvements necessary for production growth and sustainability.

Piet van Bedaf initially learned about value-added agricultural grants, including the North Dakota Agriculture Diversification and Development Grant, through personal connections and state agencies. At the beginning of the grant process, van Bedaf was unaware of the support available through Midwest Dairy and its partnership with Lasso. Once he began working with Lasso, the grant application process became far more manageable. The Lasso team brought clarity and structure, particularly in developing a business plan that resonated with the grant reviewers. The awarded grant funds were used to install a heat recovery system to capture waste heat from refrigeration compressors, improving compressor efficiency and preheating water, increasing milk

production capacity, expanding on-farm storage to meet growing milk demands, and supporting the scaling up of A2A2 milk bottling operations. Securing grant funding allowed VanBedaf Dairy to modernize its cooling and storage systems, laying the foundation for sustainable expansion and increased production.

Through improved energy efficiency and enhanced capacity, the farm is now better positioned to meet market demand and contribute to the regional agricultural economy. The project also reinforced the value of expert support in navigating grant applications, turning a complex process into a streamlined success.

Stacey Demmer (IA)

Demmer Family Farms is a second-generation dairy and crop operation in rural Iowa. The Demmer family milks 180 cows using three VMS robotic milking systems. Every other day, 30,000 pounds of milk are delivered to

Wapsie Valley, a local, family-owned cheese producer known for its preference for high-butterfat milk. The farm has adopted modern technology in some areas, but other daily tasks remain time-consuming and physically demanding.

Like many farms, Demmer Family Farms faces the challenges of an ongoing labor shortage, especially with essential but repetitive tasks each day, like pushing feed or monitoring herd health. To address this, the family

planned to invest in two pieces of equipment: an OptiDuo Feed Pusher and a BA200 Ear Tag Monitoring System. The combined impact of these tools would be significant — saving about \$12,000 in labor costs annually and increasing milk output by approximately 6%, translating to an estimated \$60,000 in added revenue. The tools would also prepare the farm for the future. Stacey Demmer first learned about the Choose Iowa grant opportunity through an industry publication, and the grant supported labor-reducing technology, like the feed pusher. She had applied for the Choose Iowa grant in the previous year, but without success. For the second attempt, Midwest Dairy's partnership with Lasso came into play. Lasso helped her significantly improve and expand the content, making the application stronger.

By partnering with Lasso, Stacey submitted a complete and competitive application, backed by project quotes, a timeline, and proof of financial match. For Demmer Family Farms, the investment in labor-saving technology was a practical decision rooted in long-term planning. It offered a way to increase productivity, reduce repetitive tasks, and create a more sustainable.

To learn more about Lasso's grant process, please visit www.midwestdairy.com/lasso.