



**Molly Pelzer**  
CEO, Midwest Dairy

## Celebrating Dairy's Sustainable Nutrition During National Nutrition Month and Beyond

Amid uncertainty and recent challenges relating to the COVID-19 virus, I want to thank all Midwest dairy farmers for your continued commitment to making sure families can still enjoy delicious dairy foods. Midwest Dairy staff are keeping the health and wellness of dairy farm families in our hearts and minds, and we appreciate the work that you do to ensure safe and nutritious dairy products are available to families throughout our region. Please take a moment to watch this [video](#) that outlines how we are shifting our work on behalf of the dairy community. For insights on COVID-19 as it relates to dairy, visit the [MidwestDairy.com](http://MidwestDairy.com) homepage.

Despite the disruption, our work on your behalf continues. March was National Nutrition Month and March 2-6 was also National School Breakfast Week. Both celebrations focused on the importance of making informed food choices and ensuring that all students have access to nutritious options, including dairy. To celebrate, we leveraged our NFL partnerships to highlight dairy and partnered with schools to launch new breakfast programs. Our efforts showcased dairy as a nutrition powerhouse and kept dairy foods top of mind during conversations happening during these nutrition celebrations.

During the month, we also helped shift the narrative around the definition of the word nutrition to not only focus on the value of dairy's nutrient package but also on sustainability and the important contributions all of you make through your on-farm practices to be stewards of the environment. We know that today's consumer not only values environmental sustainability but purchases products that align with this same commitment. We're proud to showcase your shared values around sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Read more in the articles below about insights for dairy and for educators in relation to the COVID-19 virus and about Midwest

### IN THIS ISSUE

Midwest Dairy Supports School Partners During COVID-19 Virus Pandemic

COVID-19: What it Means to Dairy and to You

NFL Player Ambassadors Share about Dairy During National Nutrition Month

Midwest Schools Celebrate National School Breakfast Week with New Breakfast Carts

Dairy Leaders Address Impact of the COVID-19 Virus on the Dairy Industry

New Dairy on the Air Podcast: How Partnerships Drive Dairy Sales

Tips for Refining Your Farm Communication Strategy

[Learn more](#) about your **checkoff investment at work!**

Dairy's efforts to increase consumer confidence and drive demand for dairy during National Nutrition Month and National School Breakfast Week.

[Back to top](#)

## Midwest Dairy Supports School Partners During COVID-19 Virus Pandemic

As the COVID-19 virus spreads across the country, school districts have laid out their plans to make sure students are getting nutritious meals while schools are closed during the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Midwest Dairy is working with our school nutrition partners to offer support during this time.

School foodservice workers, the front-line serving meals to students, are finding innovative and safe ways to serve and deliver meals. Some are offering curbside pickup service at the school while others are using the bus routes to deliver meals to students. Midwest Dairy surveyed schools and determined that some schools need equipment to keep milk and dairy products cold while serving food in innovative ways. Midwest Dairy recently purchased 1,015 soft-sided milk crate cooler bags to keep milk cold. Milk crate cooler bags are currently being offered to large districts. On Monday, March 30, all Midwest Dairy schools will have access to the inventory. There is no charge for the bags.

In addition, Midwest Dairy has entered a sponsorship with NutriStudents, a Minnesota based company that helps schools efficiently manage their United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) compliant foodservice programs. NutriStudents has created a four week menu package for districts to use during the COVID-19 virus pandemic. The package is publicly available and free to all school districts. It includes three weeks (five days each) of fully compliant menu options. The two weeks of hot and one week of cold meals will accommodate both cafeteria-served meals or grab-and-go options. The menu is accessible [online](#).

Midwest Dairy is just one part of the agriculture community that is banding together to ensure that students are still receiving adequate nutrition, including dairy, during the pandemic. Earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced a collaboration with the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, McLane Global, PepsiCo and others to deliver nearly one million



meals to students in rural schools closed due to COVID-19. The USDA is working with private sector partners to deliver boxes of food to children in rural America who are affected by school closures.

[Back to top](#)

## COVID-19: What it Means to Dairy and to You

In a time of uncertainty where situations are changing by the hour, Midwest Dairy wants to make sure you have the resources you need to stay up to date on what is happening with COVID-19, as it relates to dairy.



Here are some helpful resources:

- [National Milk Producers Federation](#)
  - [Coronavirus Prevention and Management – Dairy Farmer Handbook](#)
  - [Essential Worker Form Letter](#)
- [International Dairy Foods Association](#)
- [The Centers for Disease Control](#)

You can also check the dairy industry's [Dairy HUB](#) for additional timely resources.

Midwest Dairy is aware of questions regarding the safety of dairy products. First, there is no evidence to suggest that dairy foods produced in the United States can transmit COVID-19. Additionally, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has confirmed that heat treatment kills other corona viruses, so pasteurization is expected to also inactivate this virus. For more information, visit the Food and Drug Administration's [FAQ page](#).

If you are wondering how to protect your farm, here are some ideas from the National Milk Producers Federation:

- Access to the dairy farm by non-essential persons should be limited.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash your hands before you eat and after working in the milking parlor or other areas of the dairy.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, both on and off the dairy.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Always wear milking gloves.
- When you get home after working in the dairy, always take a shower and wash your work clothes.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Social distancing should be practiced such as when there is a need to get supplies from a farm and feed store.

Midwest Dairy will continue to keep you updated as more information becomes available and will also be starting to track refrigerated milk and shelf-stable milk sales on a weekly basis to see how the pandemic is impacting sales. Stay tuned for more information on what [Midwest Dairy](#) is doing on your behalf to increase sales and trust in this unprecedented time.

[Back to top](#)

## NFL Player Ambassadors Share about Dairy During National Nutrition Month

National Nutrition Month, celebrated each year during March, focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. The COVID-19 virus pandemic has made these messages even more relevant. Midwest Dairy leveraged partnerships with two NFL Fuel Up to Play 60 player ambassadors, Minnesota Vikings' Harrison Smith and Kansas City Chiefs' Mitchell Schwartz, to highlight dairy in the nutrition conversation.

Each player sent out messages on social media to their followers that included information about the importance of incorporating dairy into a healthy routine. Together the players reached more than 255,000 followers through their individual social media pages on Twitter and Instagram.

Mitchell Schwartz is an offensive linesman for the Kansas City Chiefs. This is his first year as a Fuel Up to Play 60 player ambassador. Harrison Smith is a Safety for the Minnesota Vikings and has been a Fuel Up to Play 60 player ambassador for one year.



[Back to top](#)

## Midwest Schools Celebrate National School Breakfast Week with New Breakfast Carts

Four Midwestern schools celebrated National School Breakfast Week by kicking off Breakfast in the Classroom programs with new breakfast carts awarded nationwide to schools participating in the Fuel Up to Play 60 program. The schools that received the carts include Yates Elementary in Illinois, Jefferson Elementary in Iowa, Prophetstown High School in Illinois and West Liberty Elementary in Iowa. Breakfast carts not only create more opportunities for students to fuel up with nutrition for their day, they also increase dairy sales by incorporating dairy options into the menus in addition to milk offered as a beverage with every meal.

At one of the schools, Jefferson Elementary in Davenport, Iowa, a ribbon cutting ceremony marked the beginning of Breakfast in the Classroom for the district, allowing students to grab a breakfast meal, take it with them and eat it in their classroom. The number of students eating breakfast before the cart were 175-190 each day on average. That number rose to 225-230 per day in just the first week of the program, with numbers anticipated to rise further as more students learn of the opportunity. The school has heard positive feedback from students and staff and anticipates other positive outcomes including decreased behavior issues within the building due to fewer hungry students.

The carts were a collaborative effort between GENYOUth and the PepsiCo Foundation. Local PepsiCo employees raised funds for the equipment as part of their employee Healthy Living campaign: Ready, Step, Move...Give!

[Back to top](#)



## Dairy Leaders Address Impact of the COVID-19 Virus on the Dairy Industry

Making sure that dairy remains an important part of everyday life for all consumers during the COVID-19 virus pandemic is the common theme of recent communications from dairy leaders Tom Gallagher, CEO of Dairy Management Inc., and Tom Vilsack, President and CEO of United States Dairy Export Council. Both leaders recently shared their thoughts about the impact of the COVID-19 virus on the dairy industry and stressed the need for the industry to band together to feed America's school children during this challenging time.

In a [Hoard's Dairyman article](#), Tom Gallagher addressed the fear of the unknown that many dairy farmers are currently facing and urged



the industry to continue to “work together and speak with one voice.” Gallagher discussed the importance of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, noting that during times of school closure, many students still need the nutrition normally provided by these programs. The dairy checkoff has been working through United States Department of Agriculture and Feeding America partners to increase access to these meals, and the milk normally served with them, for the millions of students impacted by school closures. Gallagher emphasizes the importance of dairy working together to support our communities to face these challenges head on.



Likewise, in a recent [interview with RFD-TV](#), Tom Vilsack stressed the importance of making sure students continue to receive nutrition normally provided through school channels and ensuring that dairy remains a part of those meals. He also addressed the expectation that demand for U.S. dairy will likely increase as the COVID-19 virus pandemic is resolved in other parts of the world, and that the U.S. dairy industry remains prepared to meet that increased dairy demand.

The nutrition of dairy for America’s students and the impact of the COVID-19 virus pandemic on the industry remains an important focus of checkoff and the entire dairy industry as a whole. For COVID-19-related updates and insights and best practices to keep you, your families and employees healthy, visit [MidwestDairy.com](#). Another resource for timely updates is the dairy industry’s [Dairy Hub](#).

[Back to top](#)

## New Dairy on the Air Podcast: How Partnerships Drive Dairy Sales

Uncovering opportunities to expand dairy offerings on restaurant menus and in retail is just one way the dairy checkoff works with domestic and international partners like McDonald’s, Domino’s and Yum! Brands.

In the latest episode of Midwest Dairy’s Dairy on the Air podcast, Paul Ziemnisky, executive vice president, and Rebecca MacKay, vice president, both of DMI’s Global Innovation Partnerships team, discuss some of the ways partnerships have increased demand for dairy in the U.S. and beyond.

Among the examples Ziemnisky and MacKay share are the introduction of items like a chicken and cheese pairing, a variety of coffee-based beverages starring milk, and even ultra-cheesy pizza in countries where culturally pizza isn’t a common meal but where cheese is gaining ground.



[Dairy on the Air](#) is a monthly podcast that features relevant conversations that impact the dairy community. Find all episodes online at [MidwestDairy.com](http://MidwestDairy.com) or podcast platforms including iTunes, iHeartRadio, Google Play Stitcher, Spotify and more.

[Back to top](#)

## Tips for Refining Your Farm Communication Strategy

As dairy farmers, the thought of spending nearly 7 hours a day online with two-thirds of that on social media is unfathomable. That is the reality of engaging with today's conflicted health seekers. With food being one of the most prevalent topics that concern conflicted health seekers, dairy farmers have an opportunity to engage and give them an excellent dairy experience.

A group of dairy farmers gathered in mid-March to learn more about connecting with today's consumer. The interactive workshop supported farmers with their farm's communication strategy and included a digital audit and a hands-on workshop creating videos.

Here are the top five actions dairy farmers can start implementing today:

1. Buy a domain and build a website for your farm so you own the channel.
2. Use video that makes people laugh, cry or think within the first 3 seconds.
3. Get to know today's consumer and share content that connects on shared values.
4. Post content in thirds, with each third focusing on farm life, family life and a hobby.
5. Join non-dairy groups to build relationships and become the dairy voice within those groups.

If you are interested in engaging more with today's consumer, please reach out to your local farmer relations manager.

[Back to top](#)



[MidwestDairy.com](http://MidwestDairy.com)