



Dairy farmer returns to DTN for his bottom line and peace of mind

David Graybill, Mifflintown, Pennsylvania

"Other weather forecasts were not accurate enough. As DTN HayTimer shows, it takes the right combination of drying to preserve the crop. I would guess we lost three to four times the value in crops that it would have cost us to keep our DTN subscription for the year."

David Graybill

For 18 years, David Graybill and his family have run a 58-head tie-stall dairy operation in central Pennsylvania. They have 65 milk cows and about the same number of heifers 24-months old and younger. In addition, Graybill manages 400 acres of crops and pasture.

A Penn State graduate with a Bachelor of Science in ag education and a minor in poultry, Graybill has worked in the poultry field and taught school. However, his real passion is farming. "Dairy farming has been a dream come true," he said.

DTN

"I know that 2017 was a "working in the dark" type of experience without DTN. I didn't pull the trigger quick enough to wrap hay before it was rained on. The other weather forecasts were not accurate enough to predict when rain, clouds, sun, wind, or temperatures would affect our farm."

David Graybill

What he was up against.

Like many producers in today's difficult environment, Graybill was looking to cut his costs.

"The downturn in milk prices pressed us to the limit," he explained. "In 2017, I decided we could do without the DTN service we had been using for years. It was a cost-cutting maneuver on my part. I hoped to find good weather and market sources that were free."

Using "free" services came at a price. The information was not accurate enough to support key decisions surrounding critical operations like hay production.

"I would guess we lost three to four times the value in crops that it would have cost us to keep our DTN subscription for the year," Graybill said. "I didn't pull the trigger quick enough to wrap hay before it was rained on — and rained on hay loses value very quickly."

What we did to help.

"We lost a lot more money not knowing when to make hay — or more importantly, not knowing the correct thing to do when the forecast collapsed on us," Graybill said. "In this business, you live and you learn."

So in 2018, he re-subscribed to MyDTN, which provides award-winning ag news, unbiased market insights, and highly-local

weather information. It also includes specialty tools that help ensure optimal timing and quality of hay production.

"We wrap a lot of hay in 4x4 round bales, but also try to make 3x3x7 foot bales," he explained. "Baling hay at the correct moisture is possible if you know the temp, mix of sun and clouds, and the wind."

What the impact was.

"I find that I can plan my work schedule much better when I can see the front lines coming at me and predict better when the weather will actually be changing," said Graybill. "Spraying times get easier, too, when you know what the wind speeds will be a few days in advance."

"Even during the winter, I can plan work based on when the mud will be frozen, so we can work without making huge ruts that must be fixed later," he said.

"At planting time, knowing the growing degree days for the next 15 days gives me more confidence that the 100-degree days I need to get the corn seed germinated and out of the ground is almost certain to happen," Graybill said. "That is peace of mind for me."