



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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DOC Shows Off New Addition to Waupun Farm Facility

Madison, Wis. - Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Kevin Carr welcomed Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Randy Romanski Thursday for a tour of DOC's Bureau of Correctional Enterprises (BCE) agriculture facilities in Waupun. The two walked the grounds at BCE's Waupun Farm for a look at the operation there, including the facility's new transition barn, part of a \$6 million facilities project.

The barn, which has 260 stalls, was completed in 2021 and includes sand beds to improve cow comfort. This is part of BCE's continued efforts to promote a healthy and productive dairy herd. Across the U.S., the average milk cow produces 68 lbs. of milk per day. Cows at the Waupun Farm produce an average of 90 lbs. of milk per day.

"A more-productive herd means more money for our operations," noted BCE Director Wes Ray, who led the tour. "We're almost entirely self-funded. So, the more money we make, the more we can re-invest in our facilities and the more people in DOC care we can offer jobs and training."

The Waupun Farm, along with the Waupun Dairy where the milk is ultimately processed, are both staffed by BCE employees, as well as men in the custody of DOC at John C. Burke Correctional Center in Waupun.

"It was great to have the Department of Corrections host a tour of the Waupun Farm and Dairy. These are impressive facilities," said DATCP Sec. Romanski. "There are a lot of needs in the workforce right now. With the programs DOC has in place, they are offering training that builds job skills for people in correctional facilities. This can provide an opportunity to hone their skillsets and possibly find employment when they return to the community."

"This farm provides a tremendous opportunity for persons in our care to work in an environment that provides them with jobs skills that I believe are not only going to allow them to pursue a career in agriculture when they leave our care, but these will be transferrable to many other industries," added DOC Sec. Carr.

In addition to the transition barn, the secretaries toured the farm's milking parlor and the hutches where calves were being fed. They also spoke with a few of the men working at the farm who are learning skills related to the agriculture industry, and soft skills applicable to many jobs

“Working long hours, getting my body in shape ... Also, patience in dealing with different people from different backgrounds, and operating different machinery. I’ve learned a lot here and I continue to learn every day,” Anthony said.

“Discipline, getting up in the morning, showing up for work, being part of a team, being on time for each assignment you have while you’re here,” added Bernie.

After touring the Waupun Farm, Sec. Romanski toured BCE’s Waupun Dairy, where the raw milk from the dairy herd is processed into skim milk, ice cream and sherbet. BCE is not allowed to compete with private businesses to sell these products to the general public. Instead, its primary customers are the Wisconsin DOC, Wisconsin Department of Health Services’ facilities, and Minnesota Department of Corrections facilities. In fiscal year 2021, the dairy produced:

- 89,000 five-gallon containers of skim milk
- 350,000 cases of skim milk half-pints
- 18,000 cases of ice cream
- 7,000 cases of sherbet

For Sec. Carr, the job training and rehabilitative aspects of the operation are as important as the production of the herd and annual sales. He explains that BCE workers are re-incarcerated at a lower rate than comparable persons in DOC care who did not work for BCE. Data shows 75% of BCE workers have not returned to DOC custody three years after release.

“Ninety-five percent of the persons in our care are going to return to our communities. That’s just a fact. So, when they’re in our care, we have every obligation to try and provide as many of those folks in our care as possible, with the skills, training and treatment to be successful when they leave us and not return to custody. That’s the most cost-effective form of public safety.”

BCE workers apply for their jobs. They have to have a high school degree or equivalent, and they must maintain a clean discipline record to keep their jobs.

The Waupun Farm, one of two farms managed by BCE, is approximately 1,650 acres. The primary crops - alfalfa, corn, soybeans, and wheat – are grown primarily for consumption by the Holstein dairy herd, which includes around 360 milk cows.

Since 2017, BCE has earned annual, formal recognition from DATCP for producing high-quality milk and maintaining noteworthy farm conditions.