

Coast-to-Coast Weather Adversity

Two producers share challenges

Page 6



SUNNY AND
EXTREME HEAT

HIGH

110°

LOW

95°



PARTLY
CLOUDY

HIGH

85°

LOW

70°



CLOUDY
AND WINDY

HIGH

65°

LOW

48°



SEVERE
THUNDERSTORMS

HIGH

45°

LOW

40°



BLIZZARD AND
EXTREME COLD

HIGH

0°

LOW

-20°

Larson Acres Leans on Genomics
to Make Genetic Progress Page 10

Management is the Key to
Overstocking Success Page 16

CowScout has improved
our pregnancy rate by

7%

CONCEPTION RATE ▲

MISSED HEATS ▼

BENJAMIN WUEBKERS

Malecha Dairy
Villard, Minnesota
Milking 1,070 cows

**GEA AUTOMATES OUR DAIRY
INTO THE FUTURE**

"CowScout pays for itself. We're improving reproduction and finding health issues sooner, before they escalate into something more severe—saving treatment costs and lost production while saving labor and being more efficient with our time. CowScout is one of the best investments we've made."

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PHOTO: KAREN BOHNERT

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Perspective is Everything



Despite being good, life can be hard. This certainly holds true of raising a family on a dairy farm. I can speak to that, raising my three children with my husband, Scott, on our Illinois dairy farm is truly a blessing, one I don't take for granted. Although I would be remiss if I didn't also share that dairying has its own set of hardships and challenges, too. I'm sure you all can relate.

In the past few years the industry has faced a lot of challenges — from low milk prices to labor shortage to rising feed costs to more recently, rising fuel costs. At times, these challenges have felt overwhelming, offering no end in sight. Other times, glimmers of hope propel us forward, like the much-needed rise in milk prices presents a sparkle we have been desperately waiting for.

“While farming can be hard, it also can be good. As you make your way to the field this spring, pause for a moment to look up at the farm view.”

For us, our biggest hardship came overnight, when we awoke to our entire heifer and commodity barn engulfed in flames in 2019. The days and weeks that followed now seem like a blur. Even during our family's hardships, I always try to see life from a different perspective.

My late mother often used to say, “We never pity ourselves, as there is always someone else in a worse situation.”

Isn't that the truth? When talking with other producers, I'm always reminded of challenges they face that might differ from what I'm going through on our farm. Our cover story on page 6

showcases how two producers and their cows are dealing with different weather alignments on their operations. One would prefer for sun, while the other begs for rain.

LOOK AT THE VIEW

Truthfully, as we look at the challenges that face dairy today, it's hard to complain when others across the sea are faced with even greater, unfathomable challenges, such as fleeing your home country because of war. I'm inspired by the stories of farmers still working their land and caring for cattle, despite their country struggling in war.

Pulitzer Prize author, Anna Quindlen's words tug at my heart and put it all into perspective. Quindlen says, “Look at the view and you will not be disappointed.”

Often, I find myself looking outside my farmhouse window that gives me a daily reminder of the independence others are spared from. I'm blessed to witness three generations working side-by-side on our family farm to help produce a wholesome product. We do this with worries, of course, but not with the heaviness others abroad must feel. That is freedom I don't take for granted.

So, while farming can be hard, it also can be good. As you make your way to the field this spring, pause for a moment to look up at the farm view. Take in God's artwork, and let the beauty fill your heart to help propel you forward this spring. I promise if you do just that, you certainly won't be disappointed. 🐄

Karen Bohnert
Dairy Editorial Director

Feed Costs Will Be Farmers' Greatest Challenge in 2022

In the good ole days, farmers could often be found chatting with each other at the local breakfast joint in town, solving the world's problems one cup of coffee at a time. Today, farmers are lucky if they're able to even finish their cup of coffee while it's still hot.

While dairy farmers don't get the chance to chat with each other at the local diner near as much as they used to, I'd imagine their conversations today would sound a little like this:



Do these conversations sound all too familiar?

Dairy farmers are faced with frustrating obstacles each and every year, and 2022 is certainly no exception. In a recent poll, we asked readers what the most challenging hurdle would be for their operation this year. With commodity prices surging, it's no surprise feed costs are at the forefront of producers' minds. Labor, or lack thereof, is another top concern, followed by continued supply chain headaches. Check out the full list of responses below.

What is the greatest challenge your farm will face this year?

142 RESPONSES



Do these results align with your business challenges?
Cast your vote, here!



Coast-to-Coast Producers Share How They Handle Weather Adversity

Each year farmers face a different set of challenges

No matter what part of the country you farm in, weather conditions will always be a challenge.

Brutal winters and frigid temperatures tend to plague parts of the North while the scorching sun and fearsome winds curse areas in the South. Out East, torrential rains and intense humidity cause frustration while blazing temps and bone-dry conditions wreak havoc in the West. And if you find yourself living in the central part of the U.S., well, you probably experience all of the above.

Mother Nature has never taken it easy on farmers, and she likely never will. Producers, however, have learned to adapt to the challenges she presents and overcome the hurdles she places in their paths. Two dairy farmers from opposite ends of the country share how they push past the trials and tribulations Mother Nature throws their way.

BEATING THE HEAT

Located within the Central Valley in Gustine, Calif., Tony Lopes serves as the operations team leader for his family's multisite facilities: Tony L. Lopes Dairy L.P. and P&D Dairies. Working alongside his parents, Paul and Darlene, Lopes helps manage roughly 4,000 Holsteins cows, 2,500 head of Angus-Crossbred cattle and

farms close to 2,100 acres of corn, oats, wheat, sudangrass and alfalfa.

"Here in the north part of the Central Valley, we typically have mild winters," Lopes says. "Generally, the rainy season [during early spring,] doesn't impact us too much aside from a few scattered storms that can impact our pen conditions. Toward the later part of spring leading into summer is when we start to worry about how hot it gets and, more importantly, for how long."

Nearly 2,500 miles away in Clermont, Ga., Scott Glover, owner of Glo-Crest Dairy, knows all too well the mild temperatures experienced in spring are short lived.

"In mid- to late April and into early May is when we start to get hot," Glover says. "And unfortunately, the humidity isn't too far behind. That's our biggest challenge here in Georgia. We get down into the 20s and 30s during the winter, and sometimes even down into the 'teens,' but when it starts to heat up, the humidity shows up fast."

Though the thermometer seldom climbs past 100°F in the Peach State, the heat index easily surpasses this. Fortunately, Glover is no stranger to battling the heat. For his 180 cows to perform at their peak potential, cow comfort has to be top of mind. Heat stress leads to a drop in milk

production, and for Glover, who owns and operates Mountain Fresh Creamery, a loss in production can have a significant impact on his bottom line.

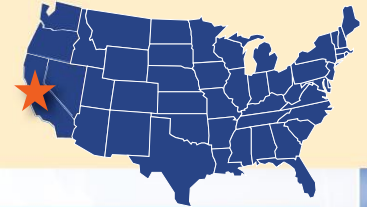
"In 2000, we had an opportunity to rent a farm here in Georgia and buy some of those cows, so we took that chance," Glover says. "In 2011, we were able to purchase some land, so we decided to build the creamery, and that's why we are still in the dairy business today. It's been a blessing for us. It allowed us to buy 115 acres here in Clermont to build and renovate a new dairy facility."

The new operation, which was previously an old dairy that operated in the 80s, needed a bit of TLC before it would be able to house any cattle. A new parlor was constructed, older buildings were retrofitted, and a new state-of-the-art freestall barn was built with cow cooling in mind.

"To produce the kind of milk that we want to produce, you have to take care of the cows," Glover says. "We could milk 50 or 60 more cows here if we wanted to, but we don't like to overcrowd, especially when it's hot out. During the cooler months, our cows get let out at night, but we like to keep them in during the summertime. They get to stay under the fans and the misters,

TONY L. LOPES DAIRY L.P. AND P&D DAIRIES

From a young age, Tony Lopes knew he was destined for a career in the dairy industry. After graduating from Cal Poly in 2018, Lopes returned home to the farm to assist his parents at their multisite locations. In 2020, Lopes propelled his career even further when he launched two different businesses, sustainiBeef LLC and Precision Genetic Solutions LLC, where he raises high-quality, Angus-crossbred beef cattle for consumers and offers genetic consulting and semen distribution to progressive dairy producers.



and they get to lie on waterbeds, so they're as content as a cow can really be here in Georgia."

Out West, keeping cows cool and comfortable also becomes a top priority for Lopes as mild spring temperatures quickly ramp up going into summer.

"Summer is always hot, so prepping for the heat is key," Lopes says. "From an infrastructure standpoint, shades and soakers are everywhere. Our relative humidity stays pretty low, so we're able to efficiently keep cows comfortable with evaporative cooling. We don't have fans everywhere, but we do utilize them primarily in the holding pens while the cows are waiting to get milked."

With four facilities to manage, keeping up with building maintenance can be a bit of a chore.

"Over the years, we've prioritized upgrades to our older facilities," Lopes says. "One thing we noticed is that we needed to provide more water availability and improve the cleanliness of the drinking water, so that is just one of the upgrades we've made over the years."

PRECIPITATION, OR LACK-THEREOF

Both Lopes and Glover share similar tactics when it comes to handling high temperatures, but



when it comes to dealing with rain, the similarities end.

"For the past few years, we've experienced extreme drought in California, and it's been a huge challenge for farmers," Lopes says. "The majority of our surface water comes from snow deposited on the Sierra Nevada mountains, and then as it melts throughout the spring and the summer, it fills up the reservoirs, dams and canals. Before the drought, producers, regardless of where they were farming, would have traditionally had abundant access to that water. And then just in the past two decades, the regulatory pressures have really clamped down on how much water is available. Now add a drought on top of that, and there's just that much less water to go around."

Lopes is fortunate in the fact that

he lives in one of the strongest water zones in the state. A different story unfolds 20 miles south.

"Down there, you'll hit some of the worst water rights in the state," Lopes adds. "There's no doubt that the snowfall and rainfall haven't been there the past few years, but when you add in the man-made component of less water rights, it gets frustrating. Farmers don't have enough water to grow their crops or forage, so the prices go up on everything. Farmers can't find enough quality feed, and if they do, they have to pay out the nose for it. So, the drought, along with the government regulations, is creating a tough situation for producers, farmers and ranchers. And it's a real shame."

In Northeastern Georgia, it's not uncommon to receive 50" to 55" of rainfall in a year. That's a stark

GLO-CREST DAIRY

Scott Glover grew up working alongside his grandfather, father and uncle on the family dairy farm. He and his wife, Jennifer, along with their daughter Eliza Jane and son Layne, continue to provide that same quality care today. The family puts that same love and care into their Mountain Fresh Creamery products. The operation specializes in providing premium cream, milk, butter and ice cream products to its customers year round.



contrast from 15" to 20" typically received in Lopes' neck of the woods.

"We expect quite a bit of rainfall each year, but for the past several years we've probably been pushing over 70," Glover says. "Our biggest challenge is when we have these thunderstorms, the wind and the rain blow into the barn and soak the stalls. When that happens, we have to go in and add sawdust to the stalls. If we don't get that cleaned up quickly, then we'll start to see some issues with mastitis."

RELIABLE MANAGEMENT

Despite the challenges Mother Nature constantly throws, both Glover and Lopes agree solid management practices are what keep their facilities moving forward.

"When we start to see signs of heat stress in the herd, our margin for error goes down," Lopes says. "From a management standpoint, we know there are things we have to get right. Keeping cows comfortable, providing access to feed, not making drastic ration changes or keeping cows locked up for too long — all of those things add up, and we want to minimize unnecessary stressors. We must make sure that we're doing all we can to put the cows in the right condition and position to perform. We know we're going to battle heat stress, but what can we do to



mitigate that? For us, it's infrastructure plus management to help those cows have the foundation they need to get through the summer."

Glover relies on a strong management foundation to get his animals through the challenging seasons.

"You can't control the forecast you're dealt, but you can control how you respond," he adds. "You learn new things each year and each season, so it's important to take what you learn and bring it with you into the next year. For us, it's all about creating a routine that

we can stick to that will keep the cows happy."

From coast to coast, each season brings new challenges, but how each farmer responds is what determines their profitability down the road.

"Each year brings a different set of challenges," Lopes says. "But we do the best we can with what we've got and always try to move forward. Learning from our successes and mistakes is what helps us get better from season to season." 🐄

By Taylor Leach



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Larson Acres Leans on Genomics to Make Genetic Progress

Streamline technology with other programs to add value

When Larson Acres purchased truckloads of cattle in 2010, they didn't have much information on those first-calf heifers that helped fuel their expansion.

Since then, the herd has doubled in size, with 2,500 lactating cattle on their century family farm in Evansville, Wis.

The decision was made to genomic test the heifer calves born from those purchased animals to determine how the future replacements fit into the farm's genetic plan. Based on that experience, owner Mike Larson not only grew comfortable with the genomic process, but also became a believer in the data genomic testing provided.

"We see the results in the milking string," Larson states. "Actual production correlates closely with genomic values."

Now that the dairy is at maximum capacity, the Larson's use genomics as part of a more comprehensive

herd strategy on narrowing down not only which females they want to keep but also addressing what resource needs should be allocated to those females.

Since the start, the Larson's have worked with Zoetis, who has helped the family navigate genomic testing. The one index Larson leans into is Dairy Wellness Profit Index® (DWP\$) with CLARIFIDE® Plus.

"That's kind of the starting point of the conversation for us to figure out what resource needs to be allocated to which animals," he shares.

DWP\$ is a comprehensive animal ranking selection index with both cow and calf wellness traits.

SENSOR TECHNOLOGY


Larson believes outside team members bring value to his dairy, such as the solid relationship he has with Zoetis, as well as CowManager and Select Sires. While he has worked with Zoetis and Select Sires for decades, he began using

CowManager just last year and says he has already seen the benefits of improved reproduction, as well as finding sick cows sooner by using sensor technology.

"It's been advantageous for us," he says. "It makes a lot of sense to pair genomic information with technology like CowManager to better monitor cows. It really works out well in the long run."

While most of the breeding is conducted internally, the Larson's also employ help from a technician, who helps on OvSynch days. For heat detection, they use a double OvSynch program for first service animals and then employ CowManager to detect heats on repeats.

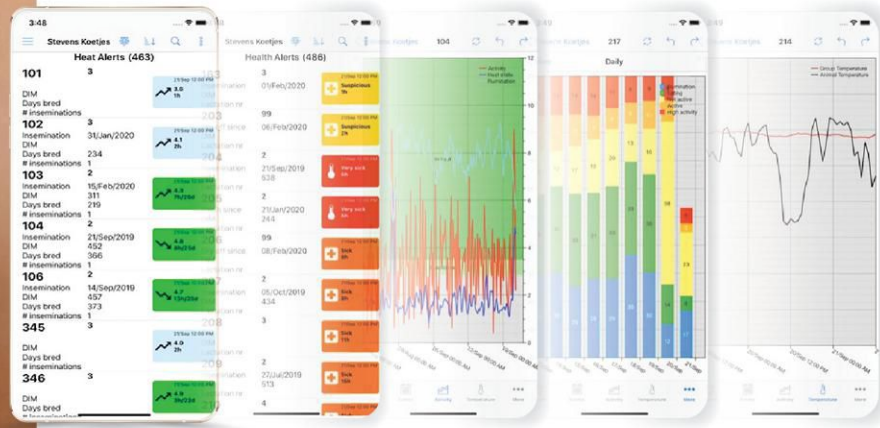
As an advanced genetic herd, Larson utilizes a significant amount of embryo technology. Half of their replacement heifers are recipients, and the other half are bred to sexed semen. In the adult herd, about half are bred to sexed semen, while the other half are either used for



Located in Evansville, Wis., Larson Acres herd has nearly doubled since 2010 to 2,500 lactating cattle.



PHOTOS: LARSON ACRES



Working with Zoetis and Select Sires, Mike Larson says it also makes sense to pair genomic information with technology like CowManager.

recipients or bred to either conventional semen or beef.

“About half of our lactation two and greater cows get bred to beef,” Larson adds.

Streamlining CLARIFIED Plus genomic data with CowManager dashboard will be extremely beneficial to the producer, says David Erf, dairy technical services geneticist with Zoetis.

“It gives you some clues as to where to go with what resources you should allocate to a particular cow,” he says.

Larson is excited to see the idea of having all of his herd’s genomic data coming together and being available on one dashboard. He says it gives a holistic approach to see if it’s worth investing all the labor and dollars into that cow. Erf says knowing a cow’s DWP\$ from using CLARIFIED PLUS is crucial, as it helps provide direction for on-farm management decisions, such as culling.

Larson says the vision of an integrated dashboard in CowManager with genomic data from Zoetis would be beneficial to his dairy, as it could easily outline the make up on

this herd. He says if a cow ranks in the bottom third and ends up with a DA, his employees know not to invest money into her.

“Let’s get all the information at our fingertips so we can make smart decisions,” he says.

Erf reminds us no two herds have the same strategy with genomic management, and the good thing is no two herds need to. With genomic testing, you can identify your herd’s best genetics, allowing you to determine what resources you want to allocate to which animal.

Regardless of economic conditions, Larson says he tries to remain consistent with a solid genomic plan.

“Overall, we try and look at the big picture, knowing we are not going to reap the rewards for a few years down the road,” he says. “So, we don’t try to make big changes, but readjusting as needed.”

Erf concurs with Larson, stating it is all about genetic progress. Stick to the initial plan even if you must recalibrate as needed to monitor genetic progress.

GENETIC IMPROVEMENTS

In Wisconsin, Larson says he sees progress when he looks out at his milking herd.

“We’ve been able to use the

genetic information to make sure that the animals we want to keep are also going to be the profitable ones,” he says. “We want to make sure that the resources are spent correctly, meaning the top is flushed and the bottom half is used for recipients.”

Larson says before genomic testing, he was leery of selling animals because he feared he was going to sell a good one. With genomics, he says he can fine-tune his management by only calving in what he needs to maintain herd size and use the remainder as recipients for his flushing program.

The percentage of Larson’s herd that falls into third lactation and greater has increased from 30% eight years ago to a 43% today. This is genetic progress Larson was aiming for, as he likes an older herd.

“We want an older herd to take advantage of those high peaks you get from third lactations and greater,” he says, “but we also want to ensure we are keeping the right type of animal.”

Larson says he is confident he would not be able to achieve this kind of progress, along with an overall healthier herd, without using genomic testing. 🐄

By Karen Bohnert

DEREK NOLAN

Consider Stocking Density Economics



The milk price outlook for 2022 has been a welcomed change of pace.

Increasing the number of cows in the herd could be a way to capture the benefit of high milk prices. However, feed prices and animal behavior should also be noted.

REVENUE 101

The economics of stocking density can be evaluated by determining the farm's profitability per stall or space. Each cow added to a pen will add revenue and costs. Economic optimal stocking density is reached when total revenue per stall equals the total cost. However, every added cow will decrease the performance of the original cows in the pen. Performance reduction needs to be considered when calculating revenues.

Research out of the University of Florida found milk and feed price drive the profitability of stocking density. Only when milk price is high and feed costs are low will higher stocking rates (150%) become feasible. Unfortunately, the outlook on feed prices for 2022 is similar to milk prices, high.

Ideal stocking rates presented by the Florida research were around 120% in the scenarios presented in the study. Additional research has shown stocking rates greater than 120% can decrease animal welfare.

LYING SPACE = LYING TIME

When there is ample access to lying space, cows spend 10 to 14 hours a day lying down. Research has shown an increase in stocking density leads to a decrease in lying time. One study found a one hour increase in lying time resulted in an increase of 3.7 lb. of milk production. High stocking density can also reduce rumination time and increase stress.

PEN LIMITS

Feedbunk or water space might be the most limiting area of the pen. Overcrowding at both the feedbunk and waterers has been shown to decrease dry-matter intake. Note that reducing 1 lb. of dry-matter intake can decrease milk production by 2 lb.

Increased stocking density can also lead to more time in the holding pen and parlor. Spending more than four hours from feed and water per day has a significant impact on dry-matter intake.

CAUTION: AVOID OVERSTOCKING TRANSITION COWS

Overstocking close-up dry cows and fresh cows can affect cow performance in the coming lactation. Limiting stocking densities to 80% can decrease the risk of transition cow diseases and increase milk production. Note that an increase in 10% stocking density can decrease milk yield by over 1.5 lb. per day throughout the next lactation. 🐄



Derek Nolan, Dairy Education and Extension Specialist, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign



Nutraceuticals: An Alternative to Antibiotics for Calves?

Research shows beneficial effects

Do alternatives to traditional pharmaceuticals have beneficial effects in calves?

At the 2021 Western Canadian Dairy Seminar, Michael Ballou and Emily Davis shared research results from several classes of nutraceuticals used to support health, performance and immunity in dairy animals.

The researchers explained that to be classified a “nutraceutical,” an oral supplement must improve some aspect of animal health or production.

This improvement might come about by stabilizing microbial communities, boosting immunity by improving mucosal response and barrier functions, adsorbing

potential pathogens or toxins, improving antioxidant status, direct antimicrobial activity, or either increasing or decreasing systemic leukocyte response.

The researchers cautioned that the nutraceutical field also is somewhat uncharted territory in veterinary medicine. They also mention there remains a lot of ambiguity regarding nutraceuticals because it is a rapidly evolving field without much regulatory oversight.

When choosing nutraceuticals, seek the advice of trusted advisers like your veterinarian counsel. 🐄

By Maureen Hanson

Three Classes of Nutraceuticals

The researchers detail three classes of nutraceuticals and provide evidence of their benefits to calves, including:

PREBIOTICS

Biological modifying polysaccharides

These indigestible carbohydrates are delivered to boost the growth of beneficial bacteria. They have been shown to improve immunity, bind harmful bacteria and adsorb harmful substances such as mycotoxins. Two prebiotics commonly used in calves are mannan-oligosaccharides (MOS) and beta-glucans (BG). Both products are fractions of cell walls from fungi (yeast). Researchers have found that MOS is effective in deterring the effects of gram-negative bacteria such as *salmonella* and *E. coli* in calves. BG has been shown to enhance both systemic immunity and localize immunity in the digestive tract.

PROBIOTICS

Direct-fed microbials

These living micro-organisms are delivered to enhance microbial communities and cellular function in the gastrointestinal tract. Common, commercially available products for livestock include *Lactobacillus* species and other lactic-acid producing bacteria, *Bifidobacterium* species, *Bacillus* species, and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Because calves’ digestive systems are rapidly developing, boosting lactic-acid-producing bacteria has been shown to help populate the gut with “good” bacteria. Probiotics have also been shown to support immunity and reduce inflammatory responses in the gastrointestinal tract of calves.

PHYTONUTRIENTS

This broad group of compounds are extracted from plants, with the goal of capturing antioxidative, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties. Essential oils fall into the phytonutrient class, as do concentrated plant extracts. A study of dairy calves supplemented with pomegranate extract showed positive immune responses. Another study administering oregano oil to preweaned dairy calves reduced scours incidence, improved blood chemistry and boosted immunoglobulins.



PHOTO: MAUREEN HANSON

Efforts to Help Heifers Love Freestalls

Is there a way to make transitioning easier?

Freestalls are unfamiliar to young heifers when they're first turned into them.

Researchers at the University of British Columbia and University of Wisconsin teamed up to evaluate some options to help acclimate heifers to freestalls more quickly, and get them to use them correctly.

In two previous studies, researcher Marina von Keyserlingk found heifer lying time decreased by three to four hours per day when young heifers were first moved from a bedded pack to freestalls.

THE TWO METHODS EVALUATED WERE:

Experiment #1: Using an older, experienced heifer as a "social model" to demonstrate correct freestall use when they entered the new environment — 44 heifers were assigned in pairs into either a control pen with no older, "pilot" heifer, or the social group, in which an experienced heifer a few months older greeted them.

Experiment #2: Mounting stationary brushes in the stalls to attract heifers into them — 52

heifers were assigned in pairs to an area with either control stalls (no brushes), or stalls equipped with grooming brushes.

Both experiments were conducted with inexperienced heifers, 4 to 5 months of age, that were moved from a bedded pack to the sand-bedded freestall pens in the same barn.

In both experiments, heifers were observed every five minutes for lying behavior two days before they entered the freestall areas, on day zero (the day they entered) and on day four after they were introduced to freestalls. These metrics included time spent standing, time spent with front feet in the stalls (whether lying took place in bedded areas versus alleys) and the direction they laid in the stalls on days zero and four.

The length of time it took for heifers to first lie down in a stall was also recorded continuously.

The only significant result was all animals in Experiment No. 1 initially laid down in the freestalls more quickly, by nearly ten-fold, than the heifers in both components of Experiment No. 2. On average, Experiment No. 1 heifers laid down after 3.8 hours of entering

the freestall pens, while heifers in Experiment No. 2 took an average of 31.4 hours to lie down for the first time after freestall introduction.

The significant factor that eventually led to correct stall use was time. By day four after freestall introduction, both lying and standing in all four experiment sub-groups returned to baseline behavioral levels observed two days before moving from the bedded pack.

Also by day four, the number of heifers exhibiting only desirable lying behavior increased, from fewer than one-third, to more than half on day zero versus day four. However, the undesirable behaviors of lying in the alley and lying backward in the stall persisted for a few animals across treatment groups.

The researchers concluded there might have been too many other novel distractions upon entering freestall pens that left heifers overwhelmed and less able to respond to the experimental efforts to encourage stall use.

Thus, it appears the quest to discover ways to quickly acclimate heifers to freestalls continues. 🐄

By Maureen Hanson

INTRODUCING



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Management is Key to Overstocking

Consider this checklist before pushing stocking ratios

Mailbox prices are the highest they have been in eight years. When milk prices are high, producers begin to question if they should milk more cows to capitalize on that milk check. Doing this often means cow pens fill up, pushing stocking ratios.

The standard stocking rate is simple. A one-to-one ratio, essentially making sure every stall is full. According to Jim Salfer, dairy Extension educator with the University of Minnesota, some farms achieve high milk production and have healthy cows with pens containing 40% more cows than stalls.

“Other farms have challenges if cows are overcrowded more than 10%,” Salfer says.

Financial consultant Gary Sipiorski says the question isn’t, “Can I push more cows?” Instead, it should be, “Am I limiting my cows potential if I overstock?”

Sipiorski concurs with Salfer, stating he has seen producers stocking capacity range anywhere from 90% to 150% capacity.

“You might ask how come such a spread,” Sipiorski says. “The answer lies in good management that is provided.”

Salfer agrees, saying that while some farms push stocking ratios and have average daily production of more than 100 lb. per cow, the reason they can do that is because of solid management on the farm.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Before producers expand pen sizes, Sipiorski suggests addressing the following questions to your herd’s management.

- > **Can the cows lay down for 12 to 14 hours a day? (Cows won’t lie down in a poor quality stall unless it is the last resort.)**
- > **Is there plenty of bunk time?**
- > **Do all cows have water to drink, especially as they exit the parlor?**
- > **What is the holding time before milking? Beyond 45 minutes is too long for a cow to stand, especially if they are milked three times a day.**
- > **Is there fresh feed available after the cows leave the parlor?**
- > **Is the freestall environment quiet? (Ex.: handling with ease, no yelling, no whistling, etc.)**
- > **How much time are cows being locked up?**
- > **How is the barn’s ventilation, and are the cows cool in the summer months?**

Sipiorski says the top third of producers are asking the tough questions and ensuring their cows are meeting the above checklist before even considering adding more cows. He also shares those elite producers work closely with proper recommendations coming from their nutritionist and other key dairy advisers.

“Depending on how the producer performs on the checklist above will

show if there is room to increase stocking ratios,” he says.

Salfer says cows will give up eating time to achieve lying time, so make sure they can do both.

“Cows ate faster to achieve longer lying times, which could affect components and increase the risk of acidosis,” he says. “Rest and rumination are important for cow welfare. 90% of rumination should happen when cows are lying down.”

Barn Layout Considerations

Stalls are often used as a metric to measure overcrowding. Too many cows means not enough stalls. Often it is one of the other basics of animal housing that is not making overstocking work. Penn State Extension provides the following barn layout considerations.

FEED ACCESS

Ideally, feed should be available 21+ hours per day and frequently pushed up, so it is within reach when a cow gets her chance at the bunk.

PHOTO: WYATT BECHTEL

NO ALERT SIGNAL

First-lactation cows are an important group to monitor, as Sipiorski says they're trying to figure out their social standing within the herd.

"You have to watch for things such as if there is a boss cow blocking waters," he says. "Truthfully, you must be good at listening to the cows, which will determine how far above you can push pen limits."

The slippery slope is no alarm goes off to alert you when you have too many cows in one pen. This can negatively affect the herd. Long-term ramifications from overstocking range from a decline in reproduction and components

to an increase in somatic cell count and an increased rate of lameness.

Sipiorski says unfortunately the negative impacts don't show up in a herd right away, but once they are present, they don't disappear immediately either.

"You need to stay in-tune with what's going on with your herd," he says. "There is no magic number."

DO THE MATH

More milk seems like it should result in more money, but that is not always the case. Salfer says producers could milk more cows and make less money, so they must not only crunch the numbers but closely

monitor what is going on within their herd.

"Milk more cows and my bulk tank rises," he says. "But my costs will go up faster than my income. So, I would advise producers to start looking at things that can't be measured a lot."

There is no short answer on whether you can push stocking rates and make overcrowding work for your dairy to benefit from a bigger milk check. The experts say while there is no cookie-cutter answer, good management and animal husbandry is key. 🐄

By Karen Bohnert

FEED SPACE

Total usable feed space divided by the number of cows in the pen gives inches per cow. The old standard used to be 24" per cow, however that can vary depending on the number of lactations an animal has had.

WATER AVAILABILITY

The easiest factor to evaluate is inches of water space per cow. Simply add up the accessible linear water space in the pen and divide by the number of animals in that pen. The goal is to be at three or more inches per animal in lactating groups. If the waterer space is too low, can extra waterers be added to the pen, or can larger waterers be installed in place of smaller ones?

The harder factor to evaluate is flow rate of water to the watering stations. To get a handle on that, you need to observe the waterers during peak demand times such as right after cows return from milking or during parlor cleanup time.

FREESTALL LAYOUTS

Some layouts, such as the three row or six row barns, will have limited feed space even when the stall stocking density is held to 100%. The follow-up question should be how many cows can eat at once and is fresh feed there?





Strong Components and Parlor Efficiencies Helps Rosy-Lane's Bottom Line

Fine-tune management creates a margin for the next generation

Working to make continuous improvements to their dairy, in terms of developing a functional cow that makes sense for the current market, has allowed Rosy-Lane Holsteins to remain optimistic about future opportunities in the industry.

"We have focused on breeding functional cows," says Jordan Matthews, a partner with Rosy-Lane Holsteins. "[We're looking for] high component cows that don't take a lot of management power to care for. So many things on a dairy [involve] fixed costs, so to milk a

cow that produces a half of a pound to a pound less of components just doesn't make sense to us."

Located in Watertown, Wis., Rosy-Lane Holsteins milks a total of 1,550 cows at two different locations, the home farm in Watertown, and the other farm in Paoli. Lloyd and Daphne Holterman have begun retirement, and both Matthews and Tim Strobel, the second partner of Rosy-Lane, continue to purchase the business from them and run the day-to-day operations.

EARLY INTRODUCTION TO ROSY-LANE

Both Matthews and Strobel started at Rosy-Lane when they were 14-years-old. Strobel was a farm kid who grew up on a small sheep farm just down the road

from the Holtermans. His current role includes overseeing fieldwork, feed management and handling the nutrient management planning, which includes dealing with DNR and CAFO permitting.

Matthews came from the city before working at Rosy-Lane.

"I remember my first and last job interview," Matthews says. "I was asked, 'Why do you want to work here?' And my response was, 'I just need money.' Then they asked me why I want to work with animals. My response was I never even had a pet."

The Holtermans encouraged Matthews to go to college, where he later graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in dairy science and an emphasis in business.

"I came back to the farm and had to find a role for myself," Matthews says.



PHOTO: ROSY-LANE HOLSTEINS

Lloyd and Daphne Holterman have begun retirement and the second partners, Jordan Mathews and Tim Strobel, continue to purchase the business from them and run operations.

Matthew's role evolved with where his strengths aligned.

"I began by working with our parlor staff and working on fine-tuning that part of the operation," he shares.

OVERCOMING HURDLES

Like many farms, Rosy-Lane says labor has been their biggest challenge for the past four to five years.

"We continually put our focus on people as that is an area we wish we could control more," Matthews says. "We want to have continued influence on improving the quality of life for all members of our farm family. Focus on better recruitment, filling gaps with high-quality candidates the first time, and working with all members of our teams to continue daily to build a team culture. Many things that are out of our control we try not to take a lot of our management time, as there isn't much we can do about it."

UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY

Always looking for ways they can reduce error and increase labor efficiencies has Rosy-Lane keeping an eye on innovation and technology.

"Technology can help in these areas, and that's where we continually look to integrate technology into our dairies," Matthews says.

For example, Rosy-Lane tracks their cow's activity with AfiFarm pedometer system. It uses Bluetooth technology hourly to help detect heats and detect lameness or sick cows from lack of activity. They also use AfiFarm as an ID when the cows enter the parlor, gathering data from the cows such as milk weights, conductivity (milk quality indicator) and milking speed.

"We use milking speed to sort our cows' groups, and we are also able to use some of the milking speed reports to check on milker protocol," Matthews says.

Rosy-Lane also has a pulsation monitoring system in their parlor that graphs pulsators 24-hours a day and generates reports when a unit is off or not functioning correctly.

Pushing components and parlor efficiencies at both of their facilities, Rosy-Lane believes they both continually help both their margins and bottom line.

Despite a lot of uncertainty facing the industry in the past couple of

years, the pair see a lot of potential in the industry to come.

"We are excited about the future, and we do have some good young staff members we are bringing on board to our operation," Matthews says. "We are very excited to see what the future holds not only for Tim and me, but people just entering the industry." 🐮

By Karen Bohnert

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More Rest for Dry Cows Might Equal More Live Calves

Research uncovers time and consistency are essential



The successful delivery and survival of a newborn calf is the ultimate goal of every dairy pregnancy.

Researchers at Ohio State University might have uncovered one way to improve those outcomes — increase the time and consistency that close-up cows are able to lie down and rest.

The team evaluated 1,044 cows from three Ohio dairies. They assess lying time and frequency starting 14 days before expected calving dates.

In addition to total lying time, they evaluated the consistency of lying session length from day to day. This was called the coefficient of variation (CV).

They also drew blood on days 14 and seven before anticipated calving to check serum nonesterified fatty acid (NEFA) concentration, and again 48 hours after calving to measure total blood calcium. Higher serum NEFA

concentration near calving has been associated with higher levels of several transition-cow diseases.

Stillbirths were defined as calves that were born dead, or died within 24 hours of birth. A total of 50 stillbirths occurred. Comparing cows that delivered live calves to those with stillbirths, the researchers observed:

- > **Dams with live calves had more lying time in the seven days leading up to calving than those with stillbirths. First-calf heifers with live calves rested an average of 55 minutes longer per day.**
- > **Difficult calvings contributed to higher levels of stillbirth, but herd, parity and season did not.**
- > **Multiparous cows with a stillborn calf had higher prepartum serum NEFA concentration compared to their multiparous herdmates with a live calf. This difference did not occur among first-calf heifers.**
- > **Regardless of parity, the incidence of postpartum milk fever was higher for dams with a stillborn calf versus those that delivered live calves.**
- > **The CV ratio for all dams with stillbirths varied significantly more in the seven days leading up to calving compared to dams with live births, regardless of parity.**

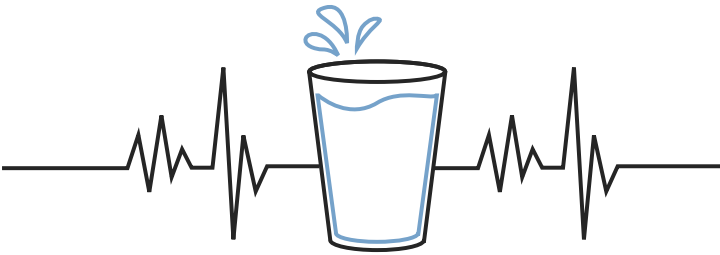
The researchers concluded dams that had stillbirths rested less, and less consistently, in the week leading up to calving. Multiparous stillbirth dams also had higher serum NEFA concentrations during that period, and all stillbirth dams had higher incidence of milk fever in the 48 hours after calving.

Encouraging close-up cows and heifers to lie down and rest could result in more live births, and dry-cow resting environments should be investigated if a herd is experiencing a high incidence of stillbirths. 🐄

By Maureen Hanson

Mayo Clinic Allies With Checkoff

Advancing the benefits of dairy



The national dairy checkoff organization has teamed up with the Mayo Clinic to explore consumers outreach efforts and conduct research and advance consumer knowledge of dairy's benefits.

DMI's CEO, Barb O'Brien says this is a milestone moment for dairy producers who have made this possible through their long-lasting commitment to research and dairy nutrition. "

The collaboration will be incorporated across Mayo Clinic's campuses in Rochester, Minn., Scottsdale and Phoenix, Ariz., and Jacksonville, Fla.

THREE AREAS OF FOCUS

- > **Research to discover how dairy foods, particularly whole milk dairy, impacts cardiovascular health and metabolic conditions. Other potential research areas include dairy's role on calm, sleep, digestive health and immunity.**
- > **Communicating dairy's strong body of evidence, new research and insights with the scientific community, health and wellness professionals and consumers.**
- > **Exploring dairy's role through digital platforms to propel people into a new way of precisely managing their wellness.**

Marilyn Hershey, chair of DMI says, "This collaboration illustrates the checkoff's consumer-first focus and our commitment to leading with credible science." 🐄

By Karen Bohnert

Don't just do DCAD, do DCAD right.



“We've fed a prepartum DCAD program now for 15 to 20 years. Through that time, different products come along. Probably the biggest game changer in feeding a DCAD product was Animate®. That product has really made a tremendous difference on the metabolic problems our cows were experiencing. We've really pretty much eliminated metabolic problems in our fresh cows.”

- Tony Herman - Owner, Herman Dairy

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These NYFarmGirls Won't Stop Telling Their Dairy Story

Sisters find success sharing life on the farm through TikTok

The names Evelyn, Claudia and Jojo Leubner might not ring a bell, but if you search for NYFarmGirls on social media, you'll quickly see they certainly have made a name for themselves. With more than a million subscribers across the board, the Leubner sisters use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to share their lives as fourth-generation dairy farmers.

Each sister has their own role on their Marietta, N.Y., farm. Evelyn works with the cows, completing herd checks, milking cows and helping with vaccinations, while Claudia's focus is on field work. She assists during planting and harvest, as well as works in the shop with machinery maintenance. Jojo is the calf manager, which is a pretty big job for a high schooler. She feeds, beds and looks after the calves every day.

The family owns Maple

Lane Farms, which is home to 500 cows, mostly consisting of Holsteins with a few Jerseys. The family also farms 2,100 acres of corn, soybeans, alfalfa and wheat. The farm is owned by a family partnership between their father, uncle and two cousins.

"Growing up on our family's dairy and crop farm is a blessing I will never take for granted," Evelyn says. "Sure, the days of working in cold temperatures and long hours can get tiring, but nothing is more rewarding than farming. Our entire

childhood was filled with learning animal husbandry, how to provide for yourself, and working alongside family. We wouldn't have it any other way."

With more than half a million followers and some nearly 15 million likes on TikTok, the Leubner sisters have succeeded in their mission to show consumers the truth about agriculture by sharing their lives on the farm and busting myths about the dairy industry.

"Seeing the disconnect from agriculture is what inspires us to share our story through TikTok," Evelyn says. "Most people will never step foot on a farm. Using TikTok, we can bring the farm to them through our phone lenses."

The social media journey for the trio began in 2015 on Instagram. The sisters say the most rewarding part of their journey has been the ability to show the public the truth of dairy farming and modern-day agriculture.

"We can reach thousands of people with the click of a button," Evelyn explains. "TikTok is amazing because people





don't have to be following you to see your content."

The sisters say being able to make a video non-followers can see, has helped them become well known.

"All you need is for your video to come upon the FYP (for you page) and thousands, even millions of people can see your content," Claudia says. "It works in our favor because we can show a huge amount of people our daily life and help them become more connected to where their food comes from."

Along with their growing TikTok followers, NYFarmGirls have 106,000 Instagram followers, more than 31,000 Facebook likes and over 73,000 YouTube subscribers.

DOCUMENT YOUR DAY

Along with helping on the farm and time spent on social media, the sisters also work on their 70-acre pumpkin farm and their large agritourism business in the fall.

"It keeps us very busy," Jojo says.

The sisters encourage other farmers to share their stories through social media, especially TikTok.

"Document your days; it seriously helps our industry so much," Evelyn says. "The more consumers trust their farmers, the better off we are. TikTok has allowed us to connect with consumers and show them we are just normal people like them. It allows us to show how well our animals are cared for and combats those videos out there that paint the dairy industry in a negative light." 🐄

By Karen Bohnert

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6 Reasons Why it Will be Easier to Find Labor

2022 trends that affect the workforce

It is reported that almost 11 million job positions are not filled in the U.S. Businesses are struggling to find good workers and the strain of the labor pool facing agriculture is evident. Labor is a top concern for dairies, as finding people to work is becoming increasingly difficult.

Stan Moore with Michigan State University Dairy Extension says the ability to fill agricultural jobs will continue to be a challenge for 2022, but says there are a few trends that might make it a bit easier than the past two years to fill jobs on your farm.

PART-TIME AND FLEXIBILITY

During the pandemic, millions of workers left the workforce including early retirees, individuals who were challenged with daycare, and individuals who were concerned about the global pandemic.

“Although I don’t see individuals that have retired wanting to go back to the same full-time jobs that they left, many are still interested in earning some income,” Moore says. “Inflation and a rocky stock market will encourage the return to work even more.”

This early retirement group will want a flexible job, along with those that continue to have difficulty piecing together daycare for their children.

Farmers will need to take a fresh look at how they put together a workforce for their farm, Moore says.

“More flexibility and shorter work hours will certainly mean more W-2s, but those who adapt will have access to some great coworkers,” he says.

Improving people management skills will be a must if you plan to attract and retain this new workforce.

In addition to retirees and those challenged with daycare, individuals who left the workforce due to concerns about the pandemic are just now returning. Government subsidies that enabled much of this to happen have mostly ended and many individuals need to replace this income with earned income.

“One of the challenges for agriculture will be the higher wages that these workers are finding in other markets as they look for jobs,” Moore says. “Farmers will need to take a close look at their cost of production and

how to use co-workers in the most productive way that they can. Tracking measurements like production/hour of labor or production/dollars of labor will need to be watched carefully and fine-tuned.”

He also shares the importance of bringing co-workers to the table, particularly how they can help make the operation more efficient and help the dairy remain competitive in the future.

LABOR SUPPLY TO INCREASE

While the worker shortage is unlikely to end anytime soon, according to Gene Marks, the founder of The Marks Group, the supply of labor will increase significantly in 2022 for six reasons.



1. Inflation. “Consumer prices have risen 7% this year, and given what I’m seeing with producer prices, which represents products that haven’t yet come to market, we can all expect this rate of increase to continue for the foreseeable future,” Marks says.

Paychex, a U.S. provider of human resources, payroll and benefits outsourcing services for small- to medium-sized businesses reports hourly wages are up almost 5% year over year, and returning workers, particularly younger workers who do entry-level jobs, are finding higher levels of compensation entice them to work.

“It’s tough to turn those wages back, so wage inflation is here to stay,” says Martin Mucci, Paychex CEO.



2. Omicron is waning. Most people have acclimated to living with COVID-19. There has been less disturbance to our personal and professional lives due to the pandemic and most are returning to their “normal” lives.



3. Less government assistance. People who can no longer rely on the government through unemployment





PHOTO: NATIONAL DAIRY FARM PROGRAM

insurance and stimulus checks need to go back to work, and more are doing so.



4. Uncertain markets. We saw the DOW nearly double in value from its low in March 2020 to now. Most experts expect the markets to be somewhat volatile in 2022. The uncertainty will likely push many people back to the job market to replenish their 401Ks.



5. Tech is paying off. With more companies replacing workers with robots, fewer jobs will be needed in certain fields. This trend is expected to expand in the years to come. Your neighbor dairy who is contemplating switching to robots won't need all their current employees. Where will they work once the robots are installed?



6. Benefits. The reality is people want flexibility. They want to work from home, and while that isn't an option for dairies, employees still want a form of flexibility to spend more time with family and friends and to be able to take time off for their children's activities.

"All these new benefits are enticing to workers, and the companies doing this will find it easier to recruit this year," Marks says.

While Marks, who regularly appears on CNBC, Fox Business and MSNBC, says the labor challenges we face will never end, he is optimistic the challenges will ease in 2022, as we put the Coronavirus pandemic in the rearview mirror. 🐄

By Karen Bohnert

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Brent, BJ, Mitzie, Brian and Seth Blanchard work side-by-side on their Iowa dairy farm.

A Single Mom's Journey Raising Kids and Cows

1,500 cows and four sons equals an inspiration

Growing up, nobody ever told Mitzie Blanchard she couldn't do something simply because she was a girl. And although Mitzie's father discouraged her from moving back to the family farm thirty years ago, that had nothing to do with the fact she is a woman. His deterrence was fueled by the fact that the dairy industry is a tough business to be in, and his farm's facilities were aging fast. Spurred by her spitfire and hardworking personality, Mitzie was determined she would prove her father wrong and own and operate her own dairy.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

Starting with 45 cows on her Charlotte, Iowa farm, Mitzie grew her herd one step at a time. Today, along with her four sons, Mitzie milks 1,300 Holstein-Jersey cross-breds and farms an equal number of acres, raising mostly corn, alfalfa and triticale, all of which goes back to feed the herd.

Mitzie is no stranger to hard

work. She was raised on her family's farm, and in 1986 her father, Ron Ketelson, decided to sell his herd in the government's Whole-Herd Buyout Program. With his entire herd going to slaughter, Ron figured that would be the end of milking any cows on his eastern Iowa dairy farm.

Mitzie had other plans. Five years after her father's cows left, she moved back to the family farm with a small herd of cows and her sons.

Today, three of her four sons, along with a nephew who Mitzie essentially raised as a son, work full

time on the family farm, Blanchard Family Dairy, LLC.

Like most farm kids, Mitzie's boys were expected to help with the work. And that they did. Mitzie credits much of her success to her boys constantly being by her side. The "boys" are now grown men — BJ, Seth, Brian and Brent — who saved their own money earned from working at the dairy to buy their own cows.

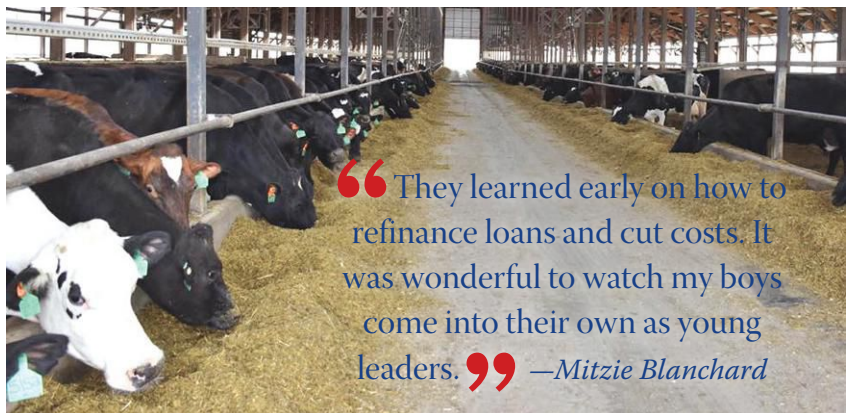
Like his mother, her oldest son, BJ is a natural-born leader and has taken on the roles of monitoring feed, managing manure and overseeing the crops.

"I just like working outside and focus on what needs to get done," he says.

Her other sons who work on the farm help in different capacities. Seth works as a general laborer, Brian oversees the shop and maintains equipment, and Brent is being prepared to take over his mother's role as a herdsman.

EXPANSION OVER THE YEARS

Nearly 20 years ago, the Blanchard's put up a 500-cow barn, their first major expansion. At the time, they formed an LLC when



“They learned early on how to refinance loans and cut costs. It was wonderful to watch my boys come into their own as young leaders.” —Mitzie Blanchard

Mitzie's sons were between the ages of 13 and 21 years old. Under the advice of the farm's accountant, the sons became official co-owners of the farm.

In 2012 and 2014, additional 500-cow barns were added, along with expanding the milking parlor in 2014. In 2017, growth came to a halt, as their milk cooperative instituted a production cap.

Growth has always been Mitzie's mantra, but she also has put a keen focus on high components and solid reproduction to help dial in on efficiencies.

Joy and pride are found in Mitzie's heartbeat, as she has been able to watch her boys grow with responsibility. Each has taken on pivotal roles that have shaped the dairy for success. She recalls back to 2009,



This past summer Mitzie turned 60, and she celebrated with her whole family by her side.

and while most producers remember it as one of their worst years, she remembers it differently. She says it was one of her best, as her boys learned some tough lessons.

"They learned early on how to refinance loans and cut costs," she says. "It was wonderful to watch my

boys come into their own as young leaders."

Together, as a family, the Blanchards have figured it out, using each expansion as a learning curve and a stepping-stone for success.

This past summer Mitzie turned 60, and the boys and their families celebrated their heroic mother by taking her off the farm to go on a trip to Colorado. The once nonstop worker admits she is starting to slow down and confesses that she doesn't worry about the future of the farm she fought hard for.

"I'm reassured by my sons' ability to run every angle of the dairy," she says. "If I have taught them anything, it is how to work hard." 🐄

By Karen Bohnert



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- Tom Hintz, DVM,
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Teamwork Advances Sustainability

Wisconsin farmer-led efforts serve as an example



Greg Siegenthaler, Grande Cheese Company, and Jim Winn, Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance board president and farmer, work together.

PHOTO: FARMERS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Environmental sustainability has been in practice on dairy operations all over the country for generations. Yet quantifying, improving and communicating sustainable practices is not basic at all.

According to Farmers for Sustainable Food (FSF), there are many ongoing efforts to develop definitions for and programs to manage agricultural sustainability. FSF is a Wisconsin-based program that facilitates innovation and shared learning among members to bring about continuous, measurable improvements in areas such as water quality, soil health and groundwater.

“We’re trying to put that whole farm picture together, but it’s a challenge, because there’s not one tool out there that gives you information about your field sustainability, your farm sustainability and your financials,” says Lauren Brey, FSF director. “You have to put everything together from different pieces.”

With a diverse group of public and private partners, FSF has developed a framework to bring the pieces together, connecting existing groups of farmers with resources to help implement, measure and share sustainable practices. It’s a free guide for anyone interested in implementing strategic and measurable sustainability practices on their farm. The framework is brought to life through farmer-led watershed conservation initiatives.

Brey says it was farmers who were already excited about conservation that influenced the sustainability concepts and resources that make up FSF’s framework.

The existence of groups such as FSF and the sustainability framework clearly spells out the importance of farmers working together toward their common goals. As a farmer-led project, the framework helps farmers meet standards that food companies will be requiring in the near future.

“We’re not telling the farmers you should do XYZ,” Brey explains. “We’re helping them put what they’re already doing into tools so that they can analyze and better understand their environmental and financial impact.”

It’s information that provides aid on several fronts: better farm management, sharing information with the supply chain, and eventually helping to inform companies building platforms that put everything together into a dashboard.

FSF recognizes the additional work required to collect sustainability data presents a significant cost challenge to many farmers.

“Finding volunteers to do that isn’t feasible for an efficient project,” Brey says. “We’re sourcing grant funding and getting sponsors to help with the technical support piece. Our staff, or hopefully future staff, would be a data collection person to go to farmers in our project to help them put their work into tools.”

NATIONWIDE SUPPORT

The checkoff-funded Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy is one of the funding supporters for the FSF Framework project. Michelle Rossman, vice president of environmental stewardship, enthusiastically describes the benefits of a farmer-led approach to implementing quantifying sustainability practices.

“The FSF Framework project aligns perfectly with the broader industrywide 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals that seek to achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) neutrality, optimize water use while maximizing recycling, and improve water quality by optimizing the use of manure and nutrients,” Rossman explains.

Much like there is no one-size-fits-all sustainability program, there’s no one place for farmers to

Scan the QR code to read the Advancing Dairy Sustainability’s story in its entirety and to also view the online sustainability resources from the Innovation Center for US Dairy.



begin implementing conservation practices or measuring them.

“Each farmer needs to understand their own management practices and economics, what their current farm system looks like,” Rossman says.

Rossman recommends forming relationships with local USDA-NRCS staff to best understand the opportunities available locally, as many programs also offer financial incentives to make changes and adopt conservation practices, and these vary from state to state. She also stresses the importance of leaning on advisers who know the individual farm and management system. Nutritionists, agronomists

and technical advisers might also have a good pulse on available programs and can be instrumental in connecting the dots to what would make the most sense on your farm.

“Everyone learns differently and goes to different sources to learn,” she says. “Some would prefer to search online instead of talking with someone, but when it comes down to it, they need to be continually learning, seeking knowledge from people and resources they trust. Take advantage of field days, workshops and webinars — find the resources that work for you.” 🐄

By Hannah Barthels

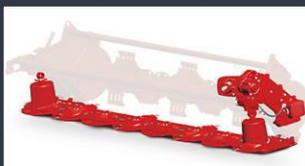
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From Byproduct to Go-To Product

Global demand for dairy whey protein soars

Once regarded as the low byproduct of cheese making, whey was often dumped down drains or spread on farm fields. But times have changed, and whey has since made huge strides. In 2021, whey was reported to have reached a global value of nearly \$5 billion.

Because of the growing health awareness among consumers, recently fueled by the pandemic, people are putting a sharp focus toward health and nutrition, says Tanner Ehmke, the lead dairy economist with CoBank.

With the rising global population and changing dietary habits of people, the food industry is experiencing robust growth, which in turn, is catalyzing the growth of the whey protein market.

Unlike other dairy products, the shelf life of whey protein is comparatively higher, as it can last for months while retaining its original

properties. Whey protein is also generally available in a powdered state, making it easy to transport.

The demand for whey protein concentrate has been growing over the past 25 years with export demand as the main catalyst. According to Ehmke, whey prices are anticipated to continue until new cheese and

to expand by an estimated 10% over the next five years. Although Ehmke says processors will need to invest in state-of-the-art technologies to meet the growing and diverse needs of global whey consumers of the future.

Plant-based alternative sources of protein such as soy protein and pea

“This especially holds true in Asia, as protein is now central to consumer’s focus on health. The U.S. stands to benefit from this continued global demand growth.”

—Tanner Ehmke, CoBank

whey processing capacity comes online over the next five years.

“This especially holds true in Asia, as protein is now central to consumers’ focus on health,” Ehmke explains. “The U.S. stands to benefit from this continued global demand growth.”

Following suit, U.S. cheese production capacity is expected

protein are not expected to disrupt the high-protein whey market due to nutritional deficiencies compared to whey derived from dairy products.

The growth whey protein has recently seen shows the product once known as waste, is now a global go-to product sensation. 🐄

By Karen Bohnert

Q How will rising corn prices affect your planting decisions this spring, and will you allocate more or fewer acres to corn silage this year with current corn prices?

A “No, rising corn prices will not impact our planting decisions or the amount of silage we do. Many of our acres go to feed the cows either through corn silage or ground corn. Since most other feed prices are rising similarly, we find that home-grown corn silage and ground corn still are competitive in the ration at similar rates to last year. Rising corn prices have caused us to fine-tune our corn grinder and will cause us to continue to improve our KP scores in silage.” —Chris Heins

Heins Family Farms

Higginsville, Mo.

Herd Size: 1,000 Holstein cows

Located in Higginsville, Mo, Heins Family Farms is managed by Chris Heins, a six-generation dairy farmer, and his parents, Paul and Cindy. The family milks 1,000 Holstein cows and farms 1,700 acres, of which 1,400 goes to corn.



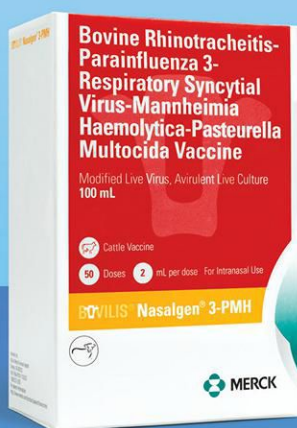


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