

Dairying in the 1970's

On page 23 of this issue, we carry an article about a modern, automated milking system being developed by Michigan State University.

The system is a far cry from the hand milking that most dairymen today still remember but no longer use. And the new system, as described in the article, offers an ease of handling dairy animals still far removed even from those dairy farms which are relatively efficient by today's standards.

The new system raises many questions: Is it really necessary to take all the work out of dairying and to pamper cows so? Won't the new system be too costly? Why put the extra cost into the dairying operation?

These are just a few of the questions which might be asked. In addition, any farmer who might be seriously interested in it will want to know how they can make it fit into their own particular operation. Or will it involve new construction?

Some of these issues are not explored in the article and this makes it more difficult for the farmer to determine the possible importance of the new system.

Contented Cows

But if we don't try to get into exact dollars and cents figures, most of us can probably answer the questions in a general way.

We know, for instance, that one firm gained a wide reputation with its advertisement of contented cows. Contented cows paid that firm well, because the public bought its products. But contented cows also pay the individual farmer because they produce more milk and do it more efficiently.

So if automation makes cows more contented by making it possible to treat the animals better, we can believe it will probably pay to pamper cows.

Bigger Dairy Farms

From another angle, we know that most authorities on dairying are telling us that in the future the most profitable dairy farms will likely be the larger ones, that the smallest dairy operations will be squeezed out of operation, that there will be only half as many dairy herds in the nation in 1980 as in 1970 — some 200,000 herds in 1980, compared to 400,000 today.

We also know that the labor situation is not favorable for those who would expand their labor needs. Cheap farm labor is rapidly becoming a thing of the past and the trend can be expected to accelerate. As competition from industry for qualified personnel seems to intensify each year, many farmers are finding it harder to attract competent labor at any price.

The built-in dilemma is obvious. On the one hand, dairy farmers are told they must expand to survive, on the other hand, they can't find the labor which makes this expansion possible.

Only those farmers who solve this dilemma in the years ahead can expect to profit and survive.

Fortunately, the Southeastern Pennsylvania farm community is more close-knit than in most other parts of the country. Brothers often cooperate, and there are many father-son operations. This type of situation often makes it possible for the small family farm for which this area is so

famous to survive and prosper when farmers in other areas are whipped by the labor dilemma.

Labor Problem Grows

But as the number of farms continue to shrink here and elsewhere, as operating costs continue to climb, as greater efficiency is required, the labor problem will continue to grow here, as elsewhere. One way or another, the labor question will have to be solved by every farmer.

Will this automation be too costly? For those who don't know how to use it efficiently, the answer will be yes. It's a difficult and delicate series of management decisions which must be made to greatly increase costs through automation while at the same time maintaining or increasing profits.

But the dairy farmer today who makes a comfortable standard of living on a small herd may make the same amount of money in the future but not live so comfortably on it. Inflation and higher living standards require more money.

Expansion Necessary

As a result, some dairymen who think today that they don't have to expand may be forced to expand or quit the business tomorrow.

If they elect to expand, they are faced with the choice between more labor or more automation. Those farmers who can't get the additional labor — for whatever reason — will be left with the choice of increasing efficiency through automation.

So the question of whether automation will be too costly will answer itself for many farmers. When all the alternatives are presented, they won't have any choice.

But while increased automation would appear to be inevitable under the present and anticipated future market conditions in dairying, the individual dairy farmer must continue to proceed with caution.

Greater Profits Is Goal

The goal is not expansion for expansion's sake, or automation for automation's sake.

Rather, the goal is expansion for increased profits, and automation for increased profits.

What the dairy industry forecasters are really saying when they predict there will only be half as many dairy farmers 10 years from now is that under the conditions which can be expected in 10 years there won't be enough profits or rewards to satisfy everyone who's now in the business. In order to satisfy everyone they are saying, half of all dairy farmers are going to have to drop out to make the business more attractive for those who remain.

Big operations with more responsibilities aren't going to appeal to farmers.

Streamlined Dairying in 80's

But more efficient operations with less hard, physical labor and higher profits will appeal. Such streamlined operations will maintain the appeal of dairy farming as a way of life in 1980 in spite of the growing challenge of urban development.

Because Southeastern Pennsylvania farmers are located in good areas near the major milk markets of the East, because they are mostly competent and adaptable farmers, because they have the will to find out how to survive and prosper in a changing world, we believe that the dairymen in Southeastern Pennsylvania will emerge in a better position in the nation's dairy industry in 1980 than they are in today.

We believe that, as in the past, many dairymen will prosper primarily through increased automation, but that some will survive through efficient use of labor.

But we do not believe that everyone in dairying today will make it to 1980. Success is not automatically assured.

Only those farmers who continue to make the right decisions, based on the particular needs of their own living styles and farming operations, will celebrate the passing of the Prosperous Seventies.



NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent

To Beware of Wood Ticks

The presence of wood ticks this summer seems to be more frequent and all citizens are urged to be on the alert for this tick on themselves as well as domestic pets. Ticks are most commonly found in wooded areas that might be visited on picnics or on brush or trees near recreational areas. The area may be sprayed weekly with Sevin, Chlordane, or Lindane. Pets may be dusted with Sevin. Some of these ticks may be carrying infection resulting in fever, so all of them should be considered dangerous.

To Prepare for Alfalfa Seeding

Growers planning for an early August alfalfa seeding can be getting their ground ready. Alfalfa requires a firm seedbed free of weeds. Early plowing followed by disking or harrowing sev-

eral times should get this result. Lime should be worked into the soil according to a complete soil test. The band seeding method has given excellent results both in August and early in the spring.

To Plan for Corn Storage

The corn crop is off to a good start and we can expect another good yield unless weather conditions change. In recent years many farmers have been pressed for a place to store their corn. Piles on the barn floor or in other places is not too desirable. Therefore, we urge the planning for additional storage either as high moisture corn for livestock feeding, or a dent-free crib for storing shelled or ear corn. Several plans are available for corn cribs.

Read Lancaster Farming For Full Market Reports

REVOLUTIONARY?

Lesson for July 5, 1970

Background Scripture: Genesis 1:1-4; John 1:1-13; Romans 1:16-21; Colossians 1:15-27; Hebrews 1:1-3.

Devotional Reading: Psalms 104:1-13.

The Book of Genesis a revolutionary book?

It may hardly seem so to us today, but to the ancient world in which Genesis first appeared it came as a startling, revolutionary concept. The Babylonians and

Egyptians, for example, believed that the gods were in nature itself. This is why they worshipped the sun, the moon, the stars, the great rivers, etc.

The poet of Genesis, however, brought forth the revolutionary concept that God was not "in nature," but above it. Before there was nature, he tells us, there was God and he created nature. Thus we do not bow in adoration to the works of nature, but to him who created them.

A "beginning" to things

Another revolutionary aspect of Genesis is found in the assertion that there was a "beginning" to things. The ancients believed that history and time revolved in an unending cycle that had neither beginning or ending. But the poet of Genesis says, "In the beginning . . ." Before that beginning was God who gave both time and history their start. Only God, therefore, is eternal; everything else has its beginning in him.

The ancients sometimes believed that their gods sometimes "blundered" into acts of creation. A God would cry and the tears would fall into the sea and become islands. A god would throw a fireball at an enemy and the fireball would become fixed in the heavens, thus becoming the sun.

What a different view we find in Genesis! Here we see God deliberately choosing to create, not

by chance or caprice, but by plan and design. We see an orderly universe unfold step by step according to the direction given it by the Creator.

And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God said, "Let there be a firmament . . ." And it was so. And God said, "Let the water under the heavens be gathered together into one place . . ." And it was so. And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation . . ." And it was so.

Here we see a Creator who creates because he desires to create. We see a Creator who creates in an orderly fashion, planning for times and seasons (1:5), planning for an orderly structure (17:8), planning by means of an orderly unfolding process (1:9,11,12).

And God saw that it was good

There is something else that Genesis wants us to know. Whereas some of the ancients regarded the material world as evil, a curse from which man needs to escape, Genesis tells us that the world God created is a good world: "And God saw that it was good." (1:10). The Creator finds joy and satisfaction in his work.

Genesis not only was a revolutionary book when it first appeared, but if we take it seriously today, it still has that capacity to startle us.

Too many people get hung-up on the details of the Creation story. Like the details of the parables which Jesus told to communicate important truth, the reader of Genesis must go beyond the details and press onto the truth the story is intended to convey. Instead of trying to make history out of what was written in a poetic literary style, we need only consider the meaning behind the revolutionary idea with which it begins: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). How he did it is of far less concern than the fact that he did do it and that he had a master plan in mind when he began.

If that thought strikes you as commonplace, if it doesn't excite you and stir your mind, it is a reflection upon you, not the Creation story!

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