

# “Be Sharp in '73” Dairy Expert Says

“In 1972, the dairy farmer got caught between a rock and a hard place,” Herman Stebbins told the annual dinner meeting of the Red Rose Dairy Herd Improvement Association on Tuesday at the Farm and Home Center.

Stebbins is manager of York County's Sinking Springs Farm. The Holstein herd under his care has a rolling herd average of over 19,000 pounds of milk and 736 pounds of butterfat annually. For the past 30 years, he has also been a farm radio commentator over radio station WSBA.

Because '72 was a bad year, Stebbins said, dairymen should try to be extra sharp managers this year. Drawing on his extensive experience with cows, he spoke about techniques to keep milk production up in a time of rising costs.

“This is the winter to cull,” he emphasized. “No matter how much you like a cow, or how well she's done for you, it's just not going to pay keeping her, you just won't be able to keep her for sentimental reasons, or to get just one more calf, if she's not a profitable milker. Especially this winter.”

Time is the most plentiful commodity dairymen have this winter, Stebbins asserted. “That time can be put to good use, doing little things that will help fatten your milk checks. With today's milk prices, if you can get an extra two pounds of milk a day from a cow, she's going to earn



Herman Stebbins, manager of York County's Sinking Springs Farm, was the guest speaker at Tuesday's annual Red Rose DHIA banquet.

you an extra \$4 a month. In a 50-cow herd, that's an extra \$200 a month. You can do a lot of things for \$200 a month.”

Stebbins talked about the three most important aspects of dairy management - cows, heifers and calves.

“If you try to skimp on caring for calves this year, you'll hurt yourself in years to come,” he asserted. “You've got to give your calves the best possible care you can afford.”

Stebbins recommended that calves be taken from the mothers the day they're born, and put into individual stalls or pens till they're off milk. Well-bedded, dry pens are a necessity, he pointed out, but calves don't need heat unless the barn is damp. Calves should be watched carefully for any signs of trouble, and treated immediately.

Worming at weaning is important. A good starter feed or a coarse dairy ration should be used, and calves should get at least some of the very best hay available. Stebbins noted that at his farm, they've observed that calves of just about any age thrive in the winter weather.

“You should resist the temptation to save money on heifers, too,” Stebbins warned. They need grain if you want them to grow into good-sized, profitable cows.”

Clean water and well-bedded pens are also important. Stebbins likened a heifer drinking from a dirty waterer to a person drinking a glass of water through shredded wheat. He said heifers should be wormed and checked periodically for mange and lice. They should be penned according to size. They should be bred at the proper size and to the best bulls available.

“At our farm, we try to bring a bred heifer back to the milking barn about two weeks before she's due to calve. We like to get her used to people, the barn and other cows before she freshens.”

Stebbins emphasized getting all the milk from heifers, and recommended stripping for at least the first few weeks.

On cow management, Stebbins first mentioned feeding a balanced coarse-textured ration that the cows like to eat, and putting the feed in something clean. “If you've got a manger, you should get all the old feed out of it at least once a day.”

In his operation, Stebbins figures on one pound of feed to every 2½ to 3 pounds of milk, plus lots of roughage.

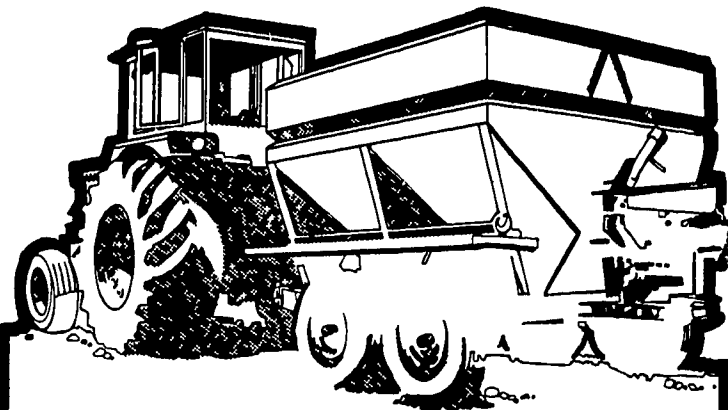
“Milking is the single most important thing we do,” he said. “You should try to milk at the same time every day of the year, and you should follow the same routine every day. Your milking

routine shouldn't be interrupted for visiting, making hay or anything else.”

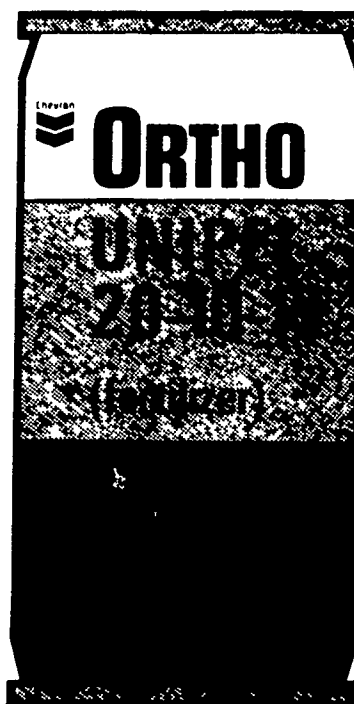
In stall barns, Stebbins feels easy milkers should be put at the head of the line. “You can't sell

on the floor,” he said. Cows should be milked dry at every milking. “Very few cows milk out at the same time in all four quarters. As soon as one quarter is finished, take the milker off. Then, when the last quarter is milked out, put all the teat cups back on, and you'll get another pound of milk.”

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## ONCE ACROSS THE FIELD DOES IT

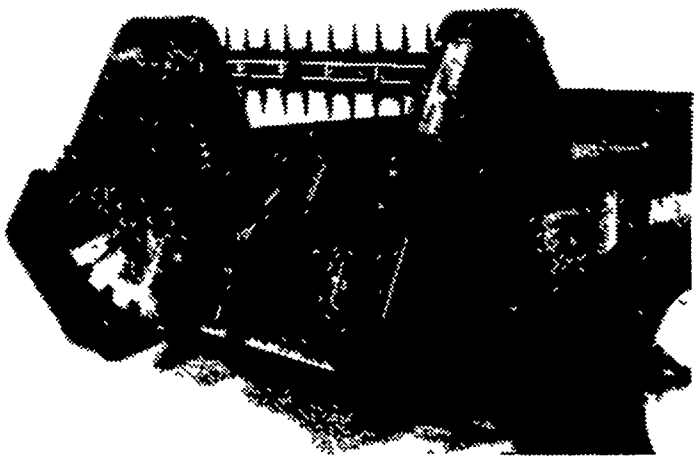


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