

Dairying with the Kirks

(Continued From Page 40)
or the spacious 69'x120' pole barn. This loose housing facility is bedded with sawdust that comes from a sawmill on the Kirk property. A 24x60 concrete-stave silo provides silage, as do a 15x100 bunk silo and a couple of smaller structures. Silage is fed 365 days a year, and Francis says it usually takes around 100 acres of corn to supply his needs. Hay is also fed year-round and in

unlimited quantities. If necessary Francis will purchase hay, but only top quality, he says. With feed costs being a concern to every dairyman, one way of keeping things in balance here has been to purchase wet brewers grains out of Baltimore. "Great feed", comments Francis, a 1949 graduate of Penn State, and former member of that university's horse, swine, and beef cattle judging teams.

A 20 percent commercial feed is fed at the ratio of 1:4 when wet brewers grains are available, and if not, then grain feeding is increased to approximately one pound of feed per three pounds of milk. The wet brewers grains are fed out in the bunk, not in the milking barn. For additional protein needs, an LPS feeder is available.

The all registered herd of Guernseys is 100 percent homebred. It has been 17 years since animals other than bulls were purchased. Mrs. Kirk is proud of the fact that she raised all but 15 of the animals in the herd, and those were started by Francis' father. Almost all heifer calves are raised as herd replacements; very few are sold, and of those leaving the herd, quite a few go to the New Bolton Center for research purposes. The cows are used by the center as a control herd in leukemia studies.

In spite of the fact that most of the animals in the Kirk herd are bred naturally, Francis considers getting the cows to conceive to be his greatest problem. He says that when he first started, about 1 cow in 50 would leave the herd as a non-breeder. "It's getting worse every year". A recent outbreak of leptospirosis proved to be costly and to guard against future occurrences of the disease, he is now vaccinating his animals regularly. Incidents of twisted stomachs are rare, as are other health problems. Some advice to those who may have problems with twisted stomachs, Francis

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, November 3, 1973—31

recommends that silage not be cut too fine.

The Kirks farm a total of 265 acres, most of which goes into corn. Other crops are primarily hay and barley. The terrain in this part of the county is rather hilly and therefore Francis has terraced many of his fields, especially those which grow corn year after year.

With a farming operation of this size, it is understandable that hired help is needed, but unfortunately not always available. While admitting that a second man would be very helpful, the family is currently getting by with just one man, Tom McMillan. The Kirk children help too, especially during the summer. All three, Mary, Thomas, and Robert enjoy showing heifers. Mary, a student at Solanco High School, has made several trips to Harrisburg with her animals, and has a number of ribbons to her credit.

The history of the Kirk family in America can be traced back to the days of William Penn. In 1712, Roger Kirk settled between Calvert and Farmington, Maryland, which at that time was considered to be a part of Pennsylvania. The land which the Kirks farm today was acquired by Francis' father in the 1930's. The family, all members of the Penn Hill Friends Meeting, lives in a large, attractive stone house which dates back to 1809. Another house on the property had its beginnings in 1756.

The picturesque 375 acre farm which they own is located about a mile and a half from the Susquehanna river in an area where there had evidently been at least one settlement of Indians. Among the relics Francis has found in his fields are an old bowl carved out of soapstone and several tomahawk heads.

With trends in agriculture changing so rapidly, an appropriate question to ask Francis is: What is your outlook for the future? While expressing some concern about rising feed costs, a feeling of optimism prevails in the heart and mind of this amiable and successful Lancaster County farmer.



Mrs. Mildred Johnson

Poultry Assoc. Annual Banquet November 8

The annual banquet meeting of the Lancaster County Poultry Association will be held at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, November 8 at the Good 'n Plenty Restaurant, Smoketown.

Featured speaker of the evening will be Mrs. Mildred Johnson, Kansas City, Mo. who is known as "America's No. 1 Woman Speaker". Mrs. Johnson authored the best-selling book "The Smiles, The Tears."

There will be an election of four directors, a brief report on committee activities, and remarks by the Lancaster County Poultry Queen, Miss Rhoda Stauffer. A brief progress report on U.E.P. will also be given.

Tickets are available from Mrs. Paul McGarvey, 5209 Brook Road, East Peteresburg, 569-6215, or any association director. Deadline for obtaining tickets is Tuesday, November 6.

Editor's Quote Book

"He who cannot in his own house entertain a guest, when abroad will find few to entertain him."

—Chinese Proverb

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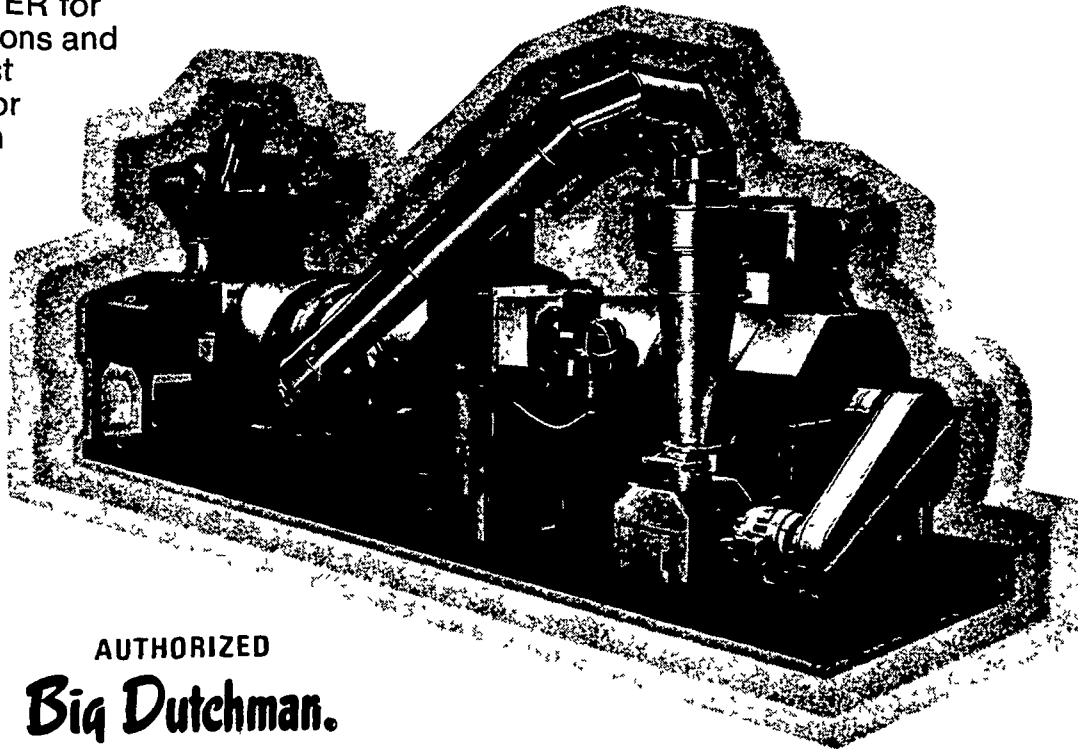
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