

Dairying with the Kirks of Peach Bottom . . .

A Hold on the Past, An Eye to the Future

Paying careful attention to the needs of individual cows is one of the best management tools dairymen can use to coax maximum production from each and every cow in their herds. Unfortunately, it's a principle that gets abused as herd size increases. Not so on Cedar Fringe Farms, owned by Francis and Ethel Kirk, Peach Bottom, RD1.

The Kirks stress individual care and attention from the day a calf is born until it leaves their Registered Guernsey herd. Every calf is provided with a pen of his own, is individually bottled and receives an infra-red lamp when necessary. This kind of individual attention is especially evident at milking time - the three row, 65-stall stable is used exclusively for milking. When the pipeline was installed in 1963, it gave the Kirks the efficiency of a parlor without

sacrificing any of the advantages of conventional housing and milking systems.

There are approximately 40 Guernsey herds in Lancaster County, and the Kirk herd is one of the largest, numbering nearly 200 head with cows, heifers and calves.

As many as 130 cows are kept at Cedar Fringe Farms during the winter. Francis' wife, Ethel, who is not from a dairy farm originally, has become thoroughly acquainted with every phase of a dairy operation. For the past 14 years she has done all the milking, morning and evening; taking time off only when it was time to give birth to a child. Now, with the children in school, she only misses one or two milkings a year.

In addition to her work in the 65-stanchion dairy barn, Mrs. Kirk also keeps all the farm



Tom Kirk, son of Francis and Ethel Kirk, checks on part of the family's 200-head herd of Registered Guernsey's on the family farm at Peach Bottom, RD1.

records, feeds all the calves, does lots of canning, keeps after a garden, and provides as best she can for the needs of her husband and three children.

Bill Juzi, local fieldman for the state Guernsey Breeders Association, speaks highly of the Kirk family and their dairy operation. "I have never known them to have a high bacteria count," he says, adding that "they always ship top quality Golden Guernsey milk to Ab-

bott's Dairies." It is obvious that a good sanitation program is followed at the Kirk dairy. The commonly avoided practice of checking each cow with a strip cup is considered important, and most cows are carefully machine stripped to maintain good udder quality and health.

The Kirks' present rolling herd average with 112.7 cows is 9249 pounds of milk and 458 pounds of butterfat or 4.9 percent fat. Mrs. Kirk pointed out that there are

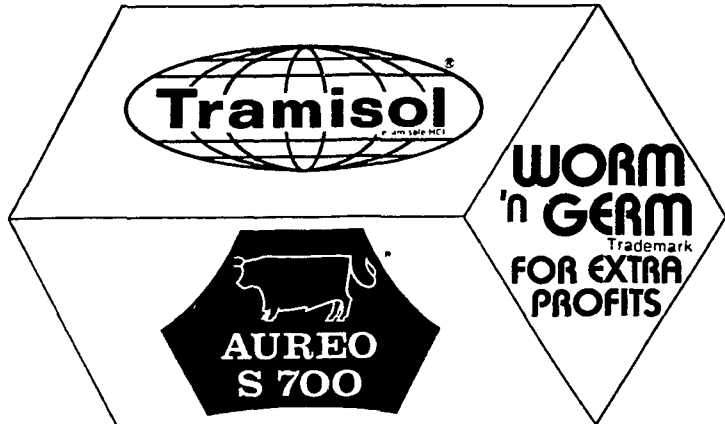
about 20 cows in the herd which make 600 pounds of butterfat or more. A first calf heifer is predicted to go over 650 fat. Several years ago the herd was averaging 530 pounds of butterfat on about 70 milking cows, 50 of which were sired by the same bull.

Once the cows are milked they are returned to a concreted feeding area, from where they have access to either the pasture

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