

Meyers known as enthusiastic farmer

By JUDY MITCHELL
Berks Co. Reporter
KEMPTON, Pa. - Ask someone in upper Berks County to name an enthusiastic young farmer in the area and the chances are good that "Don Meyers" will be the reply. How does Meyers come to fill the "enthusiastic" bill in the minds of so many people? "I don't know," Don replied to that question in a recent interview with Lancaster Farming, "except that people wonder how I do

it all." The Meyers operation in Kempton, R2, consists of 210 acres of farmland (50 of which are rented), 60 milking cows, and 50 head of young stock. Don has singlehandedly run the farm since 1968, having worked it in partnership with his father for approximately three years before that time. The Meyers moved to Berks County in 1965 because the family farm in Bucks County was not large enough to support the father-son partnership and additional farmland was becoming difficult to find.

Don recalls that he tried hired help for about six months after he took over the farm; but when that didn't work out, he decided "to go to machines."

According to Don, three Harvestores, a feed lot, and automatic equipment for feeding inside the comfort-stall barn have helped him make the conversion from a two-man to a one-man operation. Milking still takes a big chunk out of the young farmer's day, however, and in his wife Vernetta's opinion, "a person really has



Mechanized feeding equipment helps Don Meyers handle the workload on the family farm to love cows to spend six hours a day with them" Although Vernetta admits that she doesn't share her

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husband's passion for cows, she observes that "he wouldn't be happy doing anything else but dairy farming."

The Meyers have three children: Stacy, age nine; Melissa, age six; and Brooke, who is 15-month-old. Although Don handles the morning milking chores alone, he points out that he does get a helping hand in the evenings from Stacy and Melissa. The girls, according to Dad, are a big help "washing the udders, sweeping up, and feeding some of the calves." Although it's much to soon to tell where son Brooke's

interests will lay, it's obvious to the Meyers that Stacy has inherited her father's enthusiasm for cows. "Stacy is our cow girl," Vernetta remarks. Besides her eagerness to help around the barn, this was Stacy's first year in 4-H, and Vernetta recalls that although "many a tear was shed" while Stacy was training her animal this past Spring, it took just one show to convince the nine-year-old that showing and fitting dairy animals is going to be her thing. Although handling the workload on the Meyers farm is no small feat for one man, it seems likely that Don's attitude towards the business also contributes to his reputation for enthusiasm.

Although he says he doesn't like to paint "too rosy a picture," Don feels that 1976 was a good year for the dairy farmer, and he is optimistic about the future of the industry. Most significant, Don considers, "is that the price of milk stayed fairly stable last year" without experiencing the usual sharp drop during the summer months. Of course, farmers then started producing more milk, Don notes, "so milk prices are now dropping some." But although milk prices are expected to be overall slightly lower in 1977 than they were in 1976, Don is confident that prices will remain more or less stable throughout this year.

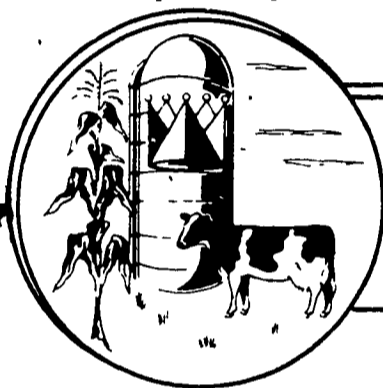
Don is a firm believer in milk promotion and is happy to report that "my milk association supports the dairy council," because he notes that some do not. Don believes advertising is important and recalls that "after the push in 1975," the dairy council's measurements indicated that consumption was up significantly even though "the store prices were up too."

"Marketing is really important if you want to support your product," Don remarked. Don sees marketing as more than just paid media advertising

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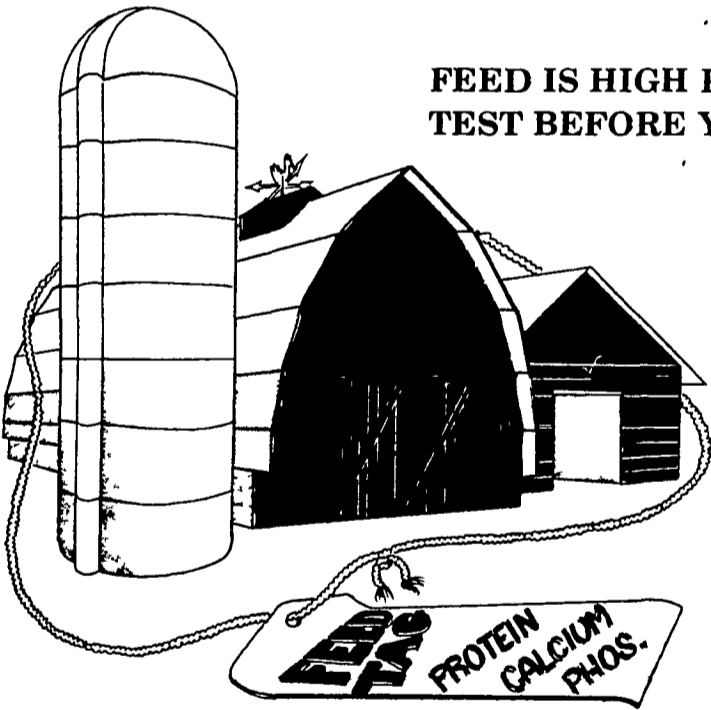
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