

# 104 York County

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sorbed the production. Some dairymen at that time spent considerable amounts of cash to upgrade their facilities, adding milk tanks and in some cases building milk houses, to qualify for the Grade A New Holland market.

New Holland Farms is a subsidiary of Queens Dairy, Brooklyn, New York, owned by Jules Kotcher. Kotcher also operated the former Graybills plant. The farmers hit by the area cutoffs report that Queens Dairy just a few weeks ago closed down a similar operation in northern New York state, which affected 200 shippers. And, about four years ago, several small dairies in the northern tier counties of Pennsylvania were bought up by the Brooklyn firm, and then shut down within a year. Eastern Milk Cooperative absorbed the farmers hit at that time with the loss of their market.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture, Kent Shelhamer, contacted in his office Tuesday by Lancaster Farming, indicated deep concern over the plight of the dairy farmers.

"I'm always unhappy and distressed when I see any farmer losing his market," said Shelhamer. "Could these shippers get together and see if providing their own hauling would be feasible? I would hope that they may be able to work something out through joint efforts."

Shippers among themselves are questioning the hauling charge reason given by New Holland Farms for pickup stoppage. Under the Federal Order 2 regulations which govern this market, shippers were only paying ten cents per hundredweight toward hauling costs which were actually costing 35 cents to the dairy. But, there is a good deal of speculation that a major contract for manufacturing milk might have been lost to the parent company.

Dairymen indicate that they have been in touch with representatives of several cooperatives and independents, but no concrete plans to take over the block of shippers had been formulated. Federal Order 2 markets were being deemed more attractive because of the yearly milk base structure in Order 4.

"This is a bad time of the year to be looking for a market," admitted Earl Fink, head of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board. "And this year seems to be exceptionally bad because of heavy production." Notification of the farmers about the cutoffs was well within PMMB regulations, which require a three-week notice of pickup stoppage.

Area independent dairies were not looking around for milk either.

"We certainly don't need any extra production," indicated M. Ebert Rutter of Rutter's Dairy in York. "We have to take a loss of 75 or 80 cents a hundredweight on our excess milk now."

Meanwhile, 104 anxious southcentral Pennsylvanians milk their cows and await word of the future of their livelihood.

"If you've dropped out of a cooperative, get back in!"

That advice comes from Edwin Zeigler, Seven Valleys R1, on the heels of the letter from New Holland Farms, Inc., informing him and 103 other dairy farmers that after April 5 they would no longer have their milk market.

Zeigler is the District 18 director from Federal Order 2 to American Dairy Association. Included in his area of representation are the three counties affected by the discontinuance of milk pickups by the Lancaster dairy west of the Susquehanna River.

We're just sitting and waiting now," indicated Zeigler earlier this week.

"There is just no market at the moment." He, and other farmers active in the Order 2 market, were uncertain whether they should all begin looking for milk buyers on an individual basis, or try to hold out collectively for a market that will accept the entire group.

"I contacted Senator Ralph Hess immediately to let him know what had happened," offered Nelson Brenneman, Spring Grove R1. Brenneman had located a market that was willing to take him on immediately, but he was waiting to see if it was possible to find an outlet for the other farmers who had also been notified of the impending market loss.

"Even the cow dealers in the area are upset," added Brenneman. "Orders were being cancelled for replacement animals because of the uncertainty of finding new outlets for the production."

John Krone, Glen Rock R2, milks a herd of 26 cows. He recalled that when the Graybill plant in York County was closed about 14 months ago, there was some discussion that the milk transferred to New Holland Farms, Inc. might only find a market for a year.

"But we haven't heard that possibility mentioned since that time, and indications were that as long

as we had the milk, there would be a market for it," said Krone.

The Glen Rock dairy farmer places most of the blame for the market loss on the fact that there is "just too much milk." But he also feels some of the problem traces to current consumer trends.

"The public seems to have forgotten that, when labor was earning one dollar an hour, farmers were being paid six dollars a hundredweight for milk. The price for milk in comparison to the rise in wages has not kept pace. But people still say milk is too high priced and they refuse to buy it," added Krone.


In spite of the seriousness of the market loss, Krone had not lost his sense of humor.

"Maybe we could go in the hog feeding business," he quipped.

Edwin Zeigler had one final word about the future of the Order 2 dairy industry.

"These guys who aren't contributing to advertising checkoffs had better wake up and start paying promotion funds or they'll wake up and find they've lost all their markets for good," he concluded.

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