

Oregon Dairy Farm expands facilities, herd

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
OREGON — A modestly-sized building, in which the retail sale of milk began five years ago from a juggling operation, still stands along the roadway leading into Oregon Dairy Farm.

Less than a year ago, the retail operation moved to a massive new full-line farm market on a knoll just to the north.

Retail space was increased nearly 10-fold in the move.

Now, on another knoll to the south, looking down on Rt. 272, an even larger rambling farm structure has risen as the latest phase of expansion at Oregon Dairy.

This latest new structure, a free stall dairy barn with a 350-cow capacity, is large enough to hold 20 of the buildings in which the milk sales were launched only a half-decade ago.

"We started the juggling operation in a building that measured just 40 feet by 44 feet," George Hurst recalled.

"Last May, the larger farm market was opened with 17,000 square feet of retail space.

"Then, we found we had to expand our farm facilities to handle our growing herd of registered Holsteins, which is being steadily increased to try and keep up with the greater demand for dairy products at the market."

The new free stall barn is long enough to hold a football field, complete with end zones, and still have plenty of space left over.

The main barn structure is 412 feet long and 86 feet wide.

"We now have about 200 head and are milking about 175," Hurst said.

"It has become just too inefficient to milk that many cows in a stanchion barn."

The new free stall barn is replacing two stanchion barns that are being used, one with 42 stalls and the other with 53 stalls.

"We were switching three groups of cows through the 42-stall barn," Hurst explained.

"It was taking about three hours to milk the 120 cows in the three groups.

"Now, we hope to milk that many cows in one hour."

Hurst explained that the Holstein herd will continue to be expanded to meet present demands for dairy products at the market.

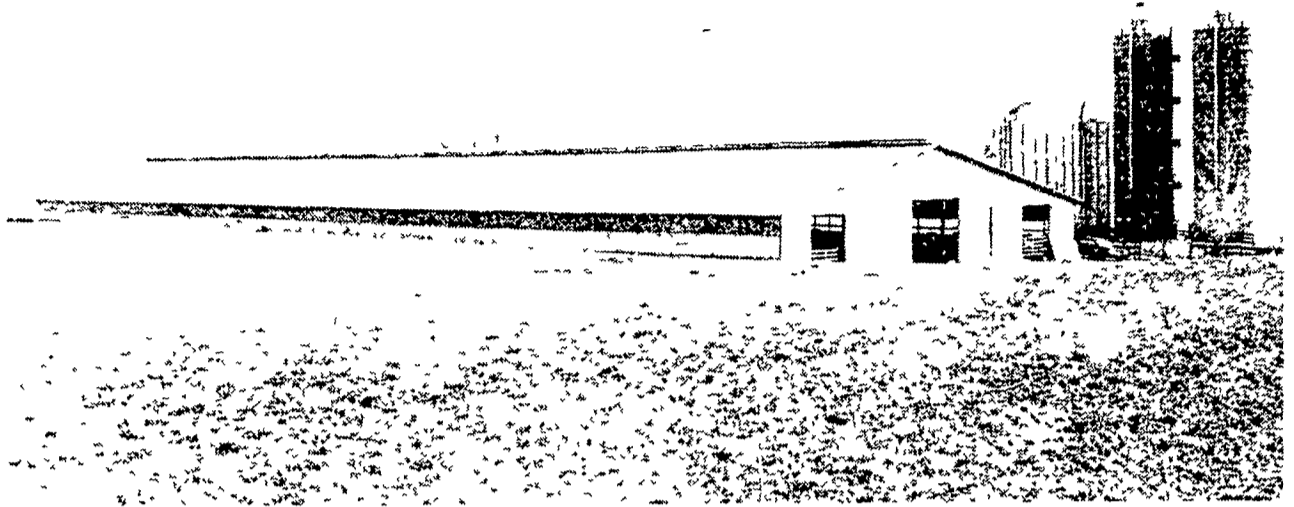
"Our initial goal is to be up to 300 head by the end of the year," he said.

The herd will be expanded through a continuing on-farm breeding program and the purchase of bred heifers, according to Hurst.

"With 300 cows, we expect to meet the current demand at the market, which is running between 7,000 and 8,000 gallons a week," Hurst said.

"Presently, we're only able to supply about 6,000 to 6,500 gallons a week and find ourselves running out at the market."

When the juggling operation began five years ago, retail sales averaged about 1,500 gallons a week.



New free stall barn with a 350-cow capacity and pair of 80-foot silos highlight expansion program at

Oregon Dairy Farm located along Rt. 272 about half-way between Lancaster and Ephrata.

"By the time we moved into the new, larger market last May," Hurst said, "we were producing and selling about 3,000 gallons a week."

In less than a year, even though production has more than doubled at Oregon Dairy, the milk supply still trailed demand, requiring the barn expansion launched already last August.

In addition to the main barn structure designed to hold 350 cows, a smaller wing, measuring 55 by 123 feet, contains a holding area, a 24-stall Polygon milking parlor, cooling equipment and tank.

A tube cooling system will

be used in processing the milk.

"We expect to cool the milk down to 37 degrees in a minute's time before it goes into the tank," Hurst said.

Heated water recovered from the cooling system will be utilized in the parlor area. "Hot water from the compressors which run the ice builder will be used to wash the cows and for washing out the milk line," Hurst said.

Besides the newer and more modern milking facilities, the new barn also provides efficiencies in both feeding and manure handling.

"Now, we will be using drive-through feeding with a mixer wagon," Hurst explained.

The present method included some hand feeding of roughage, combined with bunk feeding.

The manure handling system features alley scrapers and a shuttle-stroke cross gutter cleaner for moving the wastes to a ram pump.

The pump rams the wastes about 100 feet into a lagoon storage area with a picket dam. Liquids are permitted to filter through the picket dam into a lower evaporation pond.

"The lagoon will provide six months worth of storage," Hurst said.

"We'll be spreading the semi-solids in the spring and fall. This will replace our



George Hurst, right, and Tom Miller, herdsman, discuss plans for increasing size of registered Holstein herd to meet increasing demand for dairy products at Oregon dairy.

daily spreading and provide for better and more efficient use of the nutrients in the manure."

Hurst farms a total of 350 acres of cropland, including 100 acres of hay and the remainder in corn. Rye and barley, cut for haylage, are double-cropped.

The ration fed the herd includes silage, haylage and high moisture corn, along with a 30 percent supplement.

The herd production average is 14,700 pounds with 3.5 percent butterfat.

The current expansion

program also included two new silos, one measuring 24 by 80 feet and the other 30 by 80 feet.

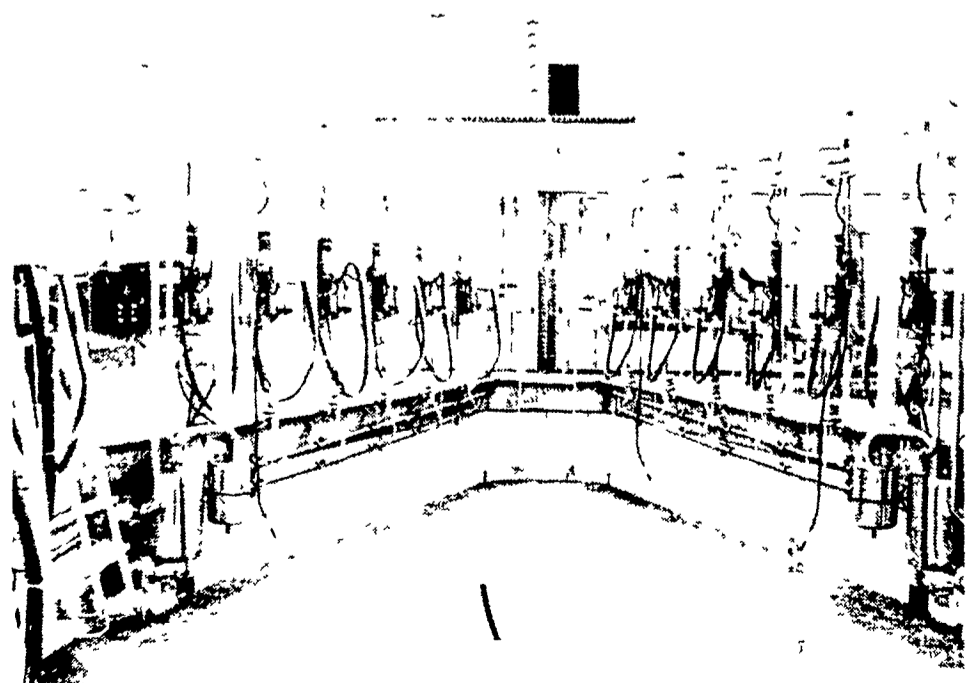
The main older barn on the farm will now be used as a calving facility and for growing heifers, according to Hurst.

"We've been stressing the dairy end of the business in the market," Hurst said.

"These new facilities should help us reach our two main goals of meeting the growing demand at the market and supply as good a product as possible."



Wide central aisle will permit more efficient drive-through feeding with a mixer-wagon in the 412-foot-long barn at Oregon Dairy Farm.



Polygon milking parlor will handle 24 cows at one time in new free stall barn.