

Hidden View Farm — 2-generation team moving ahead

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
ROBESONIA — Nestled in the rolling hills of south-central Berks County, it's appropriately named Hidden View Farm.

A vantage point well into the long, winding lane is needed before the well-kept farmstead unfolds into a picturesque rural panorama.

The nearly two-century-old stone farmhouse stands like a stately historical marker for the rich agricultural heritage that continues through the sixth generation of the Kissling family.

But beneath this surface pastoral beauty and heritage of the past lies recent noteworthy achievements in a family dairy operation which are equally significant to the present and future.

In the past seven months, the rolling herd milk production average has increased by nearly 2,500 pounds in the two-generation operation of Charles Kissling, his wife, Betty; and their son, Tim and his wife, Teresa.

And this sizable increase occurred in the higher levels of DHIA statistics.

For 1979, the Kissling production figures stood at 19,689 lbs. of milk and 728 fat.

As of April, the herd average had climbed to 22,170 lbs. of milk and 788 fat.

"We had this production jump despite an approximate 20 percent increase in the size of the herd," explains Tim Kissling, a 1978 graduate in dairy production at Penn State.

The Kisslings attribute the production gain to the feeding of a total mixed ration of corn silage, haylage, high moisture ear corn and supplements beginning last November.

"We're getting better efficiency of digestion," the father-son team says.

The average dry matter intake of a cow giving 90 lbs. of milk is now about 42 pounds, about 80 percent of what might be expected to be fed for comparable nutritional results.

And the Kissling herd has some high producers.

Highest in the herd is Hidden View Lucky Nicki, producer of 97,000 pounds in her first four lactations. She's peaked now at 135 pounds a day and is

projected to go over 30,000 pounds this year.

Presently the only excellent cow in the herd is a recent addition, Echo Hollow Atlas Maple. She's projected at 23,865 pounds this year.

Cornerstone of the production increase is centered on the achievements of the herd's junior cows. Twenty-four of the juniors, whose average age at calving 24½ months, will average over 19,000 pounds of milk. Ten of the group will make over 20,000 pounds.

The top two-year-old is Hidden View Job Christy, who calved in October at 24 months. She hasn't been under 82 pounds a day and reached 88 pounds in April. She's projected at 23,000 pounds of milk and 800 fat.

Another of the group is giving 84 pounds a day and is projected at 21,000 lbs. of milk.

The operation now has 62 cows in the herd and plans call for keeping it to about that size.

"This is a good size for the two families," says Charles Kissling.

"We'll remain this size, providing more individual cow care. We'll be striving to work with top registered cattle."

The operation also will evolve into more of a merchandising situation, too. Instead of primarily selling off excess animals, as in the past, marketing will concentrate on top quality cows.

This means that breeding has moved into the foreground.

The top producer, Nicki, will be bred to Valiant. She's under contract to Carnation Genetics for a bull calf.

The excellent cow, Echo, has been bred to Chief. The top two-year-old is bred to Milu.

Other bulls being used include Jemini, Cavalier, Conductor, Astronaut, Willow and Glen Valley Star.

Teresa and Tim are involved in the sire selection for the breeding program. A former Berks County dairy princess, Teresa assists with the milking and herd management.

Also helping with the milking operation is Betty; while Charles directs and handles the field operations.

A total of 165 acres on two farms encompassing 200 acres overall are tilled. Seventy-five acres of corn are grown, along with an equal amount of alfalfa-orchard grass mix. The remaining 15 acres is in wheat.

Of the alfalfa haylage produced, none was under 21 percent crude protein.

Quite a physical expansion is now being completed on the farm.

Two new conventional silos were built, along with an adjoining feed room where the ration is mixed.

An addition was built to the barn, containing 27 stalls and three box stalls, which can hold up to eight cows.



Shown with Echo Hollow Atlas Maple, classified 90E, are, from the left, Charles Kissling, his wife, Betty; their son, Tim, and wife Teresa.

The box stalls are used for problem cows and calving operations.

The one and one-half inch glass pipeline was replaced with a two and one-half inch stainless steel line. A 2,000-gallon tank was installed.

Construction of the barn addition permits separation of the cows into two production groups. The higher producers are kept in the new section and the lower producers in the older part of the barn.

Feeding based on a balanced ration suited for each group is done with an electric cart. The Kisslings

work with Walter Kennett, nutritionist for F.M. Brown's Sons, Inc. to formulate the proper ration.

A daily portion of about two pounds of dry hay is also fed per cow.

A good ventilation system has been provided in the barn.

Air is injected through over-wall inlets and five exhaust fans have a total capacity of 51,000 cubic feet per minute. Nine circulating fans are located throughout the barn.

To aid production, the cows are kept inside all day and put on pasture only overnight during summer months.

Returning to the herd's breeding program, Tim Kissling cites 25 bred heifers due to calve this fall.

"Some of our top genetic potential is contained in this group," he said.

This is but one of the future guidelines of the Kissling operation yet to be seen.

As they look ahead to future such milestones, Charles Kissling briefly glances back.

"It was in 1954 that we started to specialize in dairying," he said.

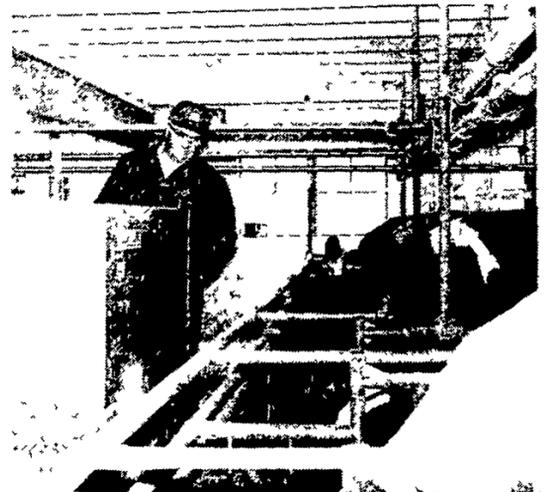
"I remember because it followed three successive dry years and crops were a failure. It's things like that which leave a scar on your mind."

He recalls that the herd went on DHIA in 1957 and started with an initial production record of 11,000 pounds.

And now, this production figure will be more than doubled this year.



Wide aisle and airy atmosphere characterize the new addition to dairy barn on the Kisslings' Hidden View Farm, R1 Robesonia.



Electric cart is used by Charles Kissling for the feeding of a total mixed ration suited for production group.



Combination of agricultural heritage and modern expansion for the future is found at the Hidden View

Farm of Charles and Tim Kissling families, R1 Robesonia.



Teresa and Tim Kissling use new box stalls for problem cows and calving. Overhead are two of nine circulating fans in barn's ventilation system.