

Fifth in a series of interviews with Glenn Shirk

Dairy employee relations—put yourself in their shoes

BY PAT KAUFFMAN
LANCASTER — Farm labor relations — where to find help and how to keep it — is the topic of this week's interview with Lancaster dairy agent, Glenn Shirk.

Glenn, where does a dairyman find good help?

Pat, I think when looking for farm help, some of the best labor a dairyman can find is from his own family. There's a tremendous opportunity for a farmer to work with his youth — to get them started. Parents must recognize the opportunity to develop good managers, good businessmen in their children by working with them closely.

The dairyman must be careful when working with members of his own family that he doesn't make farm life a life of slavery. He must show respect to the youth and give them the opportunity to gradually work into a share of the business or to make management decisions.

This can work whether the youth's future might be to gradually work into the farming operation and a transfer, whether he's equipping the youth to start out on his own in farming or whether he's training the youth for off-farm opportunities.

Dairy farmers must recognize their opportunity to approach two concerns at once: the need for extra help and the need to build strong kids, mentally as well as physically.

Next where feasible, partnerships are one of the best methods for smaller operations to obtain the help they need. The advantage here is when you're a part of the business, the business then becomes your business and you give more of yourself to it. This is also the advantage of the family farm over the corporate structure. Partners tend to work toward the best interests of the business.

A partnership does not have to be made up of family

members. A partnership could be a joint farming venture of two unrelated parties. What is necessary is to be sure that the two partners are compatible. The two people must share the same dream.

We've looked at the possibility of getting extra help from within the dairyman's family or through partnership agreements. What about other sources?

When a dairyman looks for help he must first know what he's looking for, Pat.

There are several categories in farm work. There are critical jobs which require a sharp mind and the ability to make the right decisions. Milking and feeding the cows, the duties of a herdsman, fall into that category. For this job the dairyman needs someone with good experience or who is trainable.

There's another category of farm employee that is basically just a laborer with little expertise required. If what the dairyman needs is someone to finish the baling while he milks, to take the pressure off during seasonal jobs, then this would be the right category to hire.

Perhaps in a small operation in order to free himself temporarily from the day-to-day milking chores, a dairyman could hire relief milkers. In this area, there's a great need for relief milkers. Often in their place, informal agreements between neighbors with very little money changing hands are used.

Relief milkers are particularly good during periods of sickness, hunting seasons and vacation. Often farmers are reluctant to pay the going rate for this service. But farmers need to remember that it is often less expensive in the long run to use extra help wisely than to tie themselves down to a schedule which allows insufficient time to properly manage the business or for a badly needed vacation.

When using custom milkers, it's best if the milkers get acclimated to the herd before the necessary time. Often the presence of someone new is disquieting to the herd.

The relief milker needs to know any special feeding, treatment or breeding information. He needs to know the equipment serviceman, the vet, who to call for breeding service on cows scheduled to come in heat and the sites to use, and

location of controls such as a generator in the event of a power failure.

When looking for workers a dairyman should not overlook women. Women are suited very well to many jobs on the dairy farm. Their patience is conducive to good cow-calf raising results.

Once a dairyman has found a herdsman or dairy employee, Glenn, how does he keep him?

Probably the most im-

portant point here is to be a good people manager. This means putting himself in his employee's shoes. It means working with his employee in a businesslike manner and appreciating his feelings.

Workers appreciate a boss getting his hands dirty and sweating right along with them. A dairyman must be able to bring himself to his employees' level and occasionally, bring them up to his.

Above all the dairyman must remember that his herdsman is a skilled employee and that the success of his operation can depend on him. He must hire someone capable of making sound decisions and pay him enough to make a good living.

In next week's column we'll continue with a discussion on good employer/employee relation practices.

Local Farm Credit office announces interest drop

LANCASTER — The Federal Land Bank Association of Lancaster announced a drop this week in the amount of interest charged on its variable rate mortgages. Made possible by improved market conditions, the move will benefit current member/borrowers as well as those with pending contracts.

According to Association General Manager Carl A. Brown, the area's largest agricultural lender will lower its interest rate from 12 percent to 11 percent effective July 1. In addition, some of the Land Bank's loan closing fees will be lowered.

In conjunction with this drop in Land Bank interest rates, Brown said that the Lancaster Production Credit Association will drop its interest rate by one-half percent on July 1.

That brings the total reduction of PCA loan rates since June 1 to 1.5 percent.

Brown expressed pleasure with the interest and fee actions and expressed deep

satisfaction that the cooperative credit system had managed to keep rates from going even higher in recent months.

"The Land Bank obtains funds through the sale of investment bonds," he explained. "Even though the price of those bonds went as high as 17 percent at one point, it is a tribute to our cooperative that we were

able, this time, to keep our member's interest rate from going any higher," he added.

Brown went on to say that the 11 percent interest rate was still high and represented a strain on local farmers already burdened with spiraling costs and depressed prices. "But," he stressed, "it is a step in the right direction." Brown was unwilling to speculate on future rate changes but

pointed with some optimism to recent downward shifts in the bond market as hopeful indicators.

"I believe recent events have demonstrated that a cooperative lending institution which is owned by its members can run efficiently, compete effectively, and serve the agricultural community well," Brown said.

Hog numbers increase

HARRISBURG — There were 920,000 hogs and pigs on Pennsylvania farms on June 1, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. This inventory was up six percent from December 1, 1979 and 12 percent from June 1, 1979.

Breeding stock at 132,000 was up 19 percent from last year and market hogs at 788,000 were up 11 percent. The spring (December 1979 - May 1980) pig crop of 653,000 pigs was up nine percent from last year's spring crop of 600,000. There were 87,000

sows farrowed with an average of 7.5 pigs per litter. Keystone farmers intend to farrow 80,000 sows during the fall of 1980.

Nationally, inventory of hogs and pigs was estimated at 65.9 million head, one percent above last year, 19 percent larger than 1978 and the largest June 1 inventory of record. Breeding inventory at 9.53 million head, was eight percent less than a year ago, but seven percent above two years earlier. Market hog inventory at 56.4 millionhead was three

percent larger than 1979 and 22 percent greater than 1978. United States hog producers intend to farrow 6.72 million sows during the June-November period, a decrease of eight percent from the same period last year but five percent above 1978.



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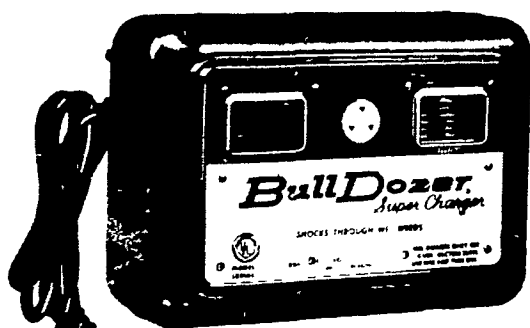
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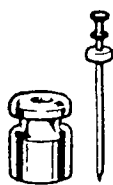
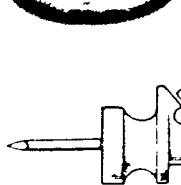
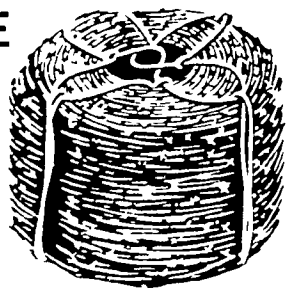
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