

They went to 3X milking for different reasons

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
ELIZABETHTOWN —
Only a handful of Lancaster County dairy farmers are milking three times a day.

Many more have tried it and soon went back to the traditional twice-a-day schedule.

But along Bossler Road near Elizabethtown there are a couple of dairy operations which are pretty well committed to staying on the 3X milking program.

Each went to the new accelerated schedule for different reasons though.

Probably the Lancaster County pioneer in three times milking is the Lester Hawthorne family farm, which has followed such a schedule for nearly three years.

The Hawthornes, particularly the younger generation involved in the operation, favor the new milking hours. They much prefer sharing the 11 p.m. milking chores over getting up every morning at 4:30 a.m. for the customary pre-dawn shift.

A few miles farther east, the Penn Springs Holstein farm of the Robert H. Kauffman family has an entirely different goal.

Primarily a purebred breeding operation, the Kauffmans are interested essentially in improving the individual production records of their best cow families for marketing purposes.

While their basic goals and objectives may differ, both agree that three times milking programs will likely not be a big new wave of dairymen's future. Key to making it work, they both explain, is having enough personnel to share the added labor burdens.

Going from twice a day to three times milking has both its pluses and minuses, according to Hawthorne and Kauffman, and here are some they've encountered in their experience with the new system.

It was the boys' idea to go to milking three times a day," Lester Hawthorne explains.

"They just didn't like that getting up at 4:30 a.m. And I can't say that I blame them. I've never liked it either."

So for nearly the past three years, milking has been done at 7 a.m., 3 and 11 p.m.

Sons Doug and Phil and son-in-law Keenan Price now are sharing the 11 p.m. shift. That means each has an 11 p.m. milking twice a week and each pulls it three times every third week.

But the next morning, the final shift milker gets to sleep in and doesn't start until 9:30 a.m. If there's a conflict, they also trade off their shifts.

At the 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. milkings, two handle the work — one milking and the other feeding and scraping. Only one handles just the milking at 11 p.m.

As far as advantages of the three times schedule, the Hawthornes like the 7 a.m. time.

"It's daylight by that time and makes it much easier to feed," Lester Hawthorne said.

"Also, it's warmer at 11 p.m. than during the early morning and we find it a bit

Better to milk at 11 p.m. than get up at 4:30 a.m.

more comfortable," Doug Hawthorne adds.

The Hawthornes believe there's less stress on the cows and they're able to catch any mastitis problems quicker since the herd is being observed a third again as often.

The only disadvantage, they point out, is a bit more trouble in getting some animals into the parlor, particularly the lower producers, because they're not as full.

The Hawthornes herd of 130 to 140 milkers is not on test, but they observed an immediate increase in production.

"On the first day we went to three times milking, we saw 500 to 600 more pounds of milk in the tank," Lester Hawthorne said.

Based entirely on milk sold, production is up about 1,500 pounds per cow to an average of about 16,000.

At the Kauffman farm, the three times schedule includes milkings at 6 a.m., 2 and 10 p.m. Herdsman Arlen Keener handles the first two



Sharing the three time milking duties at the Hawthorne family farm are, from the left, son-in-law Keenan Price and sons Phil and Doug. All prefer the 11 p.m. milking shift to getting up at 4:30 a.m. under the traditional twice daily milking. Each milks twice a week and three times every third week.

during the 11 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. shift. None are interested in returning to the old system. As Phil states: "I wouldn't go back even if it meant a drop in production." But actually the accelerated milking has meant a significant increase in production.

comparisons yet. But in the last six months, he's noted a production jump of a couple thousand pounds to bring the herd average over 18,000.

But as a purebred breeder, he's not particularly interested in herd averages. It's individual production that concerns him. Often cows are kept in the herd primarily for breeding purposes.

This year, he'll have several over the 30,000-pound mark and about eight topping 1,000 lbs. in fat.

The Kauffman barn, expanded in the summer of 1979 has 68 stalls, but the

Besides the barn enlargement, a liquid manure Slurrystore system, two silos, a feeding room and feed mixer were added. A total mixed ration is now fed, consisting of high moisture corn, haylage, corn silage and 40 percent supplement.

But breeding and marketing are the focal point of the Penn Springs operation. A program of flushing several cows for embryo transfers is continuing.

Bull calves have gone to France and Italy and a heifer to Africa. One bull is

The accelerated milking schedule in other sections of the country generally has been cited as a major factor in production increases ranging from 8 to 20 percent.

But both the Kauffmans and Hawthornes are quick to agree that it isn't for everyone. Testimony to this are those who have tried and since abandoned it.

The essential key to making it work is the availability of sufficient personnel for the one-third increase in time and effort.

Whether it be additional help or a family operation large enough to perform the increased milkings, labor is the primary governing factor in considering any change.

As both Lancaster County practitioners state:

"We couldn't do it without the extra help, according to Kauffman.

We can do it because we have sufficient people without putting a big burden on any one person," Hawthorne said.

Yes, three times milking can work, but it takes an operation that can be geared to its special requirements.

3X milking is helping to improve individual cow production achievements

milking herd has not quite gotten up to that capacity yet.

"I can't really say how much of the added production is due to the three times milking because we've made some other recent changes, too," Kauffman said.

"But it is one of the major factors."

in ABS and one is contracted to go to Carnation.

Thus, two neighboring dairy farming operations have gone to the three times milking for different reasons and an increase in production has been recorded at both.



Shown with a member of one of Penn Springs' top cow families are, from the left, Arlen Keener, herdsman, Bob Kauffman and son, Steve. Rated EX-90 as a three-year-old, Cinder's production topped 25,000 lbs. of milk with 854 fat. She's expected to go over 25,000 again this year. Her dam, a Cin-

derella cow, was EX-94 with top production of more than 31,000 lbs. and 1100 fat. An Elevation daughter is headed to be the third generation Excellent with 87 points as a two-year-old. Three times milking is working to bring out the best production records for this type of cow.

1981 wool and mohair support prices announced by USDA

LEESPORT — Price supports of \$1.35 per pound for wool and 3.718 per pound for mohair for the 1981 marketing year has been announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, according to a spokesman for the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee.

Each support price is 72.2 percent of parity and compares with 1980 support prices of \$1.23 for wool and \$2.903 for mohair.

Pulled wool will continue to be supported at a level comparable to the support price for shorn wool through payments on unshorn lambs.

As in past years, shorn wool payments will be based

on a percentage of each producer's returns from sales. The percentage will be that which is required to raise the national average price received by all producers for shorn wool in 1981 up to the support price of \$1.35 a pound. Currently shorn wool prices are averaging about 90 cents per pound.

Mohair payments will be calculated in a manner similar to wool. However, mohair payments for 1981 probably will not be necessary as it appears that the average price received by producers in the open market may be higher than the support price.