

Barnard, Adams outline challenges facing producers

BY LAUREL SCHAEFFER
Staff Correspondent

LEESPORT—Two Penn State Extension specialists issued warnings of caution to area dairymen recently during the Berks County Dairy Day, held here at the county agricultural center.

"The next few years don't look to be too bright," warned Sid Barnard, extension food scientist. "There are challenges to meet," he continued, explaining that Commodity Credit Corporation Stocks of butter, cheese, and powdered milk are at very high levels and increasing daily.

By mid-December 1981 the CCC stocks of butter reached 200 million pounds; cheese, 555 million pounds; and powdered skim milk, 830 million pounds. He also noted that the milk production trend was still upward with production at 10 percent over demand.

Richard Adams, extension dairy specialist, told the area farmers to watch their debt load, since interest rates are too high. He warned the dairymen to watch their capital outlay and expenses, "forget the marginal items," he added.

Listing several marginal items, Adams included silage preservatives, feed additives, yeast, low level antibiotics, surplus protein, and excessive grain. The dairy specialist also told his audience that the average dairy farm is feeding an excess of 1200 pounds of feed per cow.

"Milk tewe cows," he told the dairymen. "Cost accounts have proven that you can sell off 25 to 30 percent of your herd and still make as much money," he continued. Dairymen must become labor efficient you can't afford surplus help."

Adams told the dairymen present that he expects the next three or four years to be tight for the milk producers.

Adams continued his discussion on raising replacement heifers, warning the dairymen they should be striving for adequate growth in

these young animals. He reminded the producers present to keep ahead of worm and coccidiosis problems and supply the heifers with plenty of clean water.

The dairy specialist warned against "bargain milk" replacers urging the producers to check the labels for ingredients and cautioning them against using replacers with wheat, oats or soybean, flours, meat solubles, fish protein, glucose, sucrose or starch.

"Vegetable proteins are not well utilized until calves are three to four weeks of age," he explained.

Adams also told the dairymen that not all colostrum is of good quality and it should be fed properly. This includes timing, as well as quantity. Inferior colostrum is produced from dams who have only been dry three or four weeks; were pre-milked; are leakers; are deficient in protein, selenium, vitamin E; or have liver damage, Adams explained. Inferior colostrum also results when it is diluted or taken from a dirty udder. Adams told the dairymen to substitute frozen colostrum if poor colostrum is suspected. He advised the producers to always keep five to ten quarts of frozen colostrum on hand. It should be fed for the calf's first two or three feedings in its first 12 to 24 hours after birth.

The dairy specialist recommended milk replacer containing milk, skim, butter or whey with protein levels of 22 to 28 percent; a fat content of 10 to 20 percent; crude fiber at only 0.5 to 1.0 percent; iron at 125 parts per million and Selenium 0.1 ppm.

Adams also suggested that sour colostrum may be fed, diluted to 2-3 parts colostrum to one part water, and fed at 10 percent bodyweight. He warned against feeding waste milk to calves if they are to be sold less than 8 to 12 weeks after weaning.

Calves should also be given BoSe the first week if they are not on a good milk replacer because all calves are deficient in vitamin E at birth. Calves also can be weaned at

30 to 40 days of age if they are eating one pound of concentrate per day, Adams said.

While discussing management of older heifers, Adams explained they should be of adequate size without becoming too fat. Heifers which are too fat have a tendency to have fatty reproductive tracts and smaller birth canals. Holsteins and Brown Swiss should weigh between 750 and 800 pounds at first breeding which should be between 13 and 15 months of age, Adams said.

At six months of age heifers should be fed a 12 percent/protein ration and have a hay equivalent intake of 2 percent of their body weight. They need feed available 10 to 12 hours per day the specialist stated. And if good quality hay or haylage is available, they don't need a lot of grain either, he concluded.

After issuing his warning to the dairymen, Barnard took the floor again and continued his discussion by stating that imitation cheese currently has about 10 percent of the real cheese market, primarily in pizza and cheese dishes where the difference cannot be easily distinguished.

Use of imitation cheese can cut ingredient costs by up to 40 percent, he explained to the dairymen, and he forecast the cost advantage to increase. "Go after food labeling," he advised the dairymen.

Barnard also explained UHT milk to the dairymen. It is a pasteurization process for milk which increases the shelf life of fresh milk to 6-8 months without refrigeration. Barnard explained that UHT milk means ultra-high

temperatures. The milk is heated to 300 degrees Fahrenheit for one second in a sterilized process and put on a sterilized container.

Presently he estimates the cost of UHT processing to be about 20 cents more per quart of milk. He predicted the costs will drop to about 5 cents per quart with large volume production.

Presently this form of pasteurized milk is marketed in European countries, used on ships, and purchased by campers and hikers. There is one dairy on the West Coast processing milk this way, and two more plants are planned to start this year. Barnard told the dairymen that UHT milk will not have much effect on milk

consumption or fluid sales unless priced more competitively.


The food scientist also noted that UHT milk has more of a cooked flavor but not as much as evaporated milk. "Most consumers will accept the taste," he commented.

Barnard also touched on price supports, recommending that the dairymen get better before bigger.

He also commented that the dairy industry is doing an excellent job of keeping their product antibiotic free. "Consumers seldom get milk containing antibiotics," he said. However the specialist warned the dairymen to screen their milk if antibiotics are suspected and to be very careful to avoid contamination.




Jim Kile, far left, Lillian Harnish, Harold Myer, and Dave Bitler were members of a panel of dairymen who discussed management of young stock during the recent Berks Dairy Day.



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