

# Lyon-Dale Farm building up, building on

**BY TRISH WILLIAMS**  
**FOGELSVILLE** — As I drove north on 222 from Lancaster on Monday morning through pouring rain, I felt fortunate that I had put off washing my car over the weekend, but was saddened a bit by the dreary day that I had hoped would be picture perfect for my visit to the hills of western Lehigh County. I had scheduled a farm visit with Joanne Dominick, a goat enthusiast, who had been very helpful to me by providing the goings-on in the goat circles.

In our conversations I was impressed with her zeal for goat husbandry, and she had soon sparked my interest. Before I knew it I had invited myself for a farm visit, and found myself northward bound. I could almost visualize Joanne, although I had never seen her. As I drove I was passed by a large number of truckloads of hay going south to the New Holland hay market, and began to conjure up images of the rolling farmland in western Lehigh County.

Carefully following the directions Joanne had given me, nearly there, I found myself winding down a dirt road over hills, and hoping that I wouldn't meet another vehicle. The scenery was beautiful even if the weather was not. Large old farm houses and bank barns graced the hills, more beautiful was the absence of new buildings and crowdedness.

Capping the last hill I was right on top of the Dominick's Lyon-Dale Farm. The road winds right between the house and barn that are nestled in the side of a hill. The 103

acres of Lyon-Dale must be farmed with a Bible under the tractor seat, I thought.

Seeing the terrain one become appreciative of the necessity to keep the ground in permanent cover. Farming practices are

hours a day on the farm while she attended school.

"I guess I burned out on cows," Joanne explains. "I got my fill when I worked for my father."

Now living on her grandparents farm, northwest of Fogelsville,

**No kidding, this is serious farming**

definitely limited by the topography, making livestock farming one of the best suited for the area. But why goats? This was my first question to Joanne.

"Sheep are dumb," Joanne said laughingly. "Goats are smart and they have a personality. I handle all of the dairy work, my husband works full time off of the farm. Cows are too much for me, it seems to take a guy to handle them, they are too big and pushy. Beside cows don't have a personality, they just knock you over on their way to feed bunk."

Growing up on a dairy farm seven miles away in Chapman, Joanne is well acquainted with dairy farming. During the late fifties her father, Arthur Snyder, was the largest producer for Lehigh Valley Farmers. At that time he was milking 130 cows and Joanne was helping four to five

Joanne plans to stay with goats. The farm has been in the family for over 150 years, the barn that houses the goats is the original barn built by Joanne's ancestors.

Her husband Dennis and his brother Tim are in the process of converting part of the bank barn into a milking parlor for the goat herd. They are adding on a room for the bulk tank that has already been purchased for the expansion.

Nubians predominate the 27 head herd, but there are a few Saanens and one LaMancha. Joanne has plans to increase the herd to a total of 100, almost a four fold increase. Such a large expansion will require a great deal of ability in herd management. Joanne demonstrates to me the capability to meet such a challenge by her thoroughness in record keeping, and in conversation by expressing knowledge of herd health management.

The herd is on DHIR testing, with a rolling herd average of 2357 pounds of milk. The Lyon-Dale herd is one of four herds on 'Round Robin' or 'Circle' testing. The herd is tested once per month by an owner of one of the other four herds in the circle.

All the milking is done by hand presently. Joanne estimates that it takes her about three minutes to milk each goat. Most of her does will milk for 310 days. Joanne's favorite doe, Cathy, milked 365 days in her last lactation.

Cathy is a young stylish Nubian doe. Last year in the show circuit Cathy won six grand champions and two reserve grand champions. I do not profess to be a judge of goats, but I do have a good eye for dairy character. I was very impressed with the sharpness and the strength of these goats.

At present all the goats are registered and classified with a herd average of Very Good at 84.5. Joanne confides that when she expands the herd to 100 she will probably buy some good grade milkers to mitigate the cost of such a rapid expansion.

After only about hour on the farm I was certain Joanne had all the personal resources to manage such a dairy operation. But having grown up myself on a dairy farm, under somewhat of a conservative philosophy, in my mind I still questioned how the operation was going turn a profit. Joanne had the answer for that too.

Dennis and Joanne grow corn, oats, soybeans and hay. They mix their own feed, buying only alfalfa pellets and minerals. Based on logistics the herd is not large enough now to ship to a commercial dairy, so the milk is fed to veal calves. Proceeds from the sale of the vealers pays for the costs of all the bought feed, as well as other expenses. Buck fees also help pay the bills as does the sale of buck kids.

By this fall the milking parlor should be finished and the herd up to 35 milkers. She plans to be up to a total herd of 100 by the following fall. This week alone she purchased four milking does.

The new milking facilities will  
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Some of the new additions to the herd give Joanne a warm welcome.



These two inquisitive kids poke their heads over the pen to check out the camera toting stranger.



Jamie helps his Uncle Tim with the construction of the milking parlor.



Joanne can milk out a goat by hand in about three minutes.



Joanne shows off her favorite goat, Cathy, as the rest of the herd looks on.