

Can city family make it in dairying?

They sure can!

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MEADVILLE — What would the odds be on a young couple with no farming experience, moving from the Baltimore-Annapolis urban sprawl of Maryland to a remote area in Western Pennsylvania, start dairy farming on a "whim"?

Would they be able to pay all of their bills on time?

Would they be able to manage and feed a herd of Jersey cows and have them produce profitably?

Would they be able to understand the economics of getting cows bred back on time?

Could they raise healthy herd replacements?

And, would they be able to redesign and remodel an old dairy barn into an efficient, modern day set-up?

Meet Dave and Donna Reusing and their daughters, Lisa, 16, and

Amy, 8, of New Hope Farm, R5, Meadville. They are "all of the above" and love their new lifestyle.

"We set off from Maryland to go homesteading," Reusing says with a smile, and "one thing lead to another."

A successful contractor in Maryland in partnership with his father, Reusing explained that they felt that the population was closing in on them in their former location and their business was no longer the driving force in their lives. Reusing says that one day his father said "he was going to retire, so I thought that if he is going to, so am I." After liquidating the contracting business and selling their former homes, the elder Reusing as well as his son, Dave, began looking for a farm.

Remembering back to 1980 when



The Reusing family of New Hope Farm stands in front of new milk house that was built by Dave.



Amy, the youngest of the Reusing clan, is in charge of chickens and receives egg money in return.

they first moved to their farm, Reusing states that they planned to be self-sufficient in their new home and eagerly anticipated the country atmosphere of rural Pennsylvania. Although they completely remodeled their new "homestead" home of 100 years of age and enjoyed raising chickens and ducks on their 25 acres, they "began going 'stir crazy' for something to do", Reusing says.

So, although the Reusing family "never even planted a garden", they met a neighbor who they refer to as their "resident agronomist" and took all his advice offered. Through his help, the family learned about gardening and crops and began to entertain the notion of growing enough feed on their acreage for their growing number of animals.

In addition to their "neighborly lessons on agronomy", the Reusings began to purchase their milk from Spruce Row Farms juggling operation owned by Charles Hotson. Stating that at first he just "nosed around out of curiosity", Reusing began to help out at the farm a bit and developed a fondness for those "broad-backed Jersey cows", while at the same time learning some of the basics of dairy farming.

"She wanted the family milk cow, but she didn't want me to milk cows", Reusing said of his wife,

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Donna Reusing has chief chore of calf feeding. They are placed in hutches right after birth, but dam is hand milked to feed calf immediately.



New milk house has been added to front of barn. Wood silo will become the barn office and will feature hexagonal windows.



Dave Reusing now enjoys milking with new pipeline system that was recently installed.