

Small is 240 milking string

CHINO VALLEY, Cal. — In the Chino Valley, Walt and Bill Lekkerkerker, owners of Lekker Holsteins are somewhat unusual. For one thing, their herd is small - it numbers just 290 cows with 240 milking. For another thing, the cows are milked in a barn with pipeline milkers, and for another their raise their own herd replacements.

Bill Lekkerkerker explained that the family decided to have fewer numbers and keep the quality of their herd high. Indeed, in 1980 this herd had the highest production in the nation. In 1982 their record on three times a day milking was 24,424 pounds of milk and 902 pounds of fat for 285 cows. The milking herd of 235 cows averaged 27,404 pounds of milk and 1,012 pounds of fat.

The three times a day milking began three years ago and Lekkerkerker says, "The first year we got a great response from everybody. Now it is harder to keep the body weight and harder to maintain the production."

Cows are fed in production groups, with three high groups, two middle groups and one low. Concentrates are fed in the barn three times daily and alfalfa hay is feed outside five times daily. Lekker Holsteins employes a professional nutritionist, who analyzes hay before it is purchased, and buys it only if it meets herd requirements.

Cows are milked in an 80-cow,

face-out flat barn with a two-inch high-line milking system.

Lekkerkerker says they have a lot of embryo transplant work done, flushing their own cows and maintaining their own herd of recipients.

Calf raising is done by Mrs. Walt Lekkerkerker who sees that they get colostrum within the first half hour. They are then fed for 14 days by bottle. Fresh grain is offered twice daily along with fresh water. Mrs. Lekkerkerker said the grain troughs are cleaned regularly. It is in this calf barn, where calves are housed in individual pens, that a "Drink Milk" sign is prominently displayed, evidence of their recognition for the need to advertise.

The younger Lekkerkerker observed that cows were dying in the unusual humidity, though he said, "We haven't lost any yet." He added that the usual weather consists of very high temperatures, but with dry heat and a breeze, "Cows are really under stress."

A more traditional dairy by Chino Valley standards is Bos Dairy at Mira Loma, owned and operated by Tony Bos. The prefix Bossir is well known in dairy circles, and Bos has about 190 registered animals in his herd of 700 cows. A colorful brochure advertises some of the top animals in the herd.

The 590 milking animals are milked three times daily in a fully

automated double-10 herringbone "pregnant" parlor. There is a 50 cow string of registered cows milked in a flat barn. Bossir Holsteins boasts 16 bulls in studs across the country.

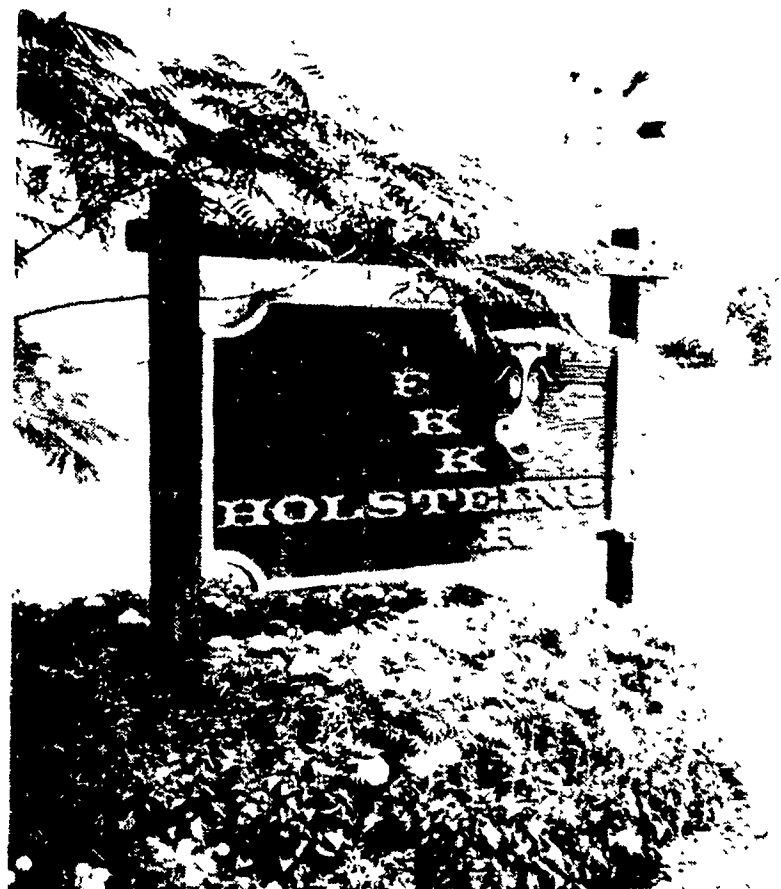
The 1982 production was 21,412 pounds of milk and 759 pounds of fat for 650 cows. The milking herd averaged 550 cows with 25,235 pounds of milk and 894 pounds of fat.

Nutritionist Howard Hellman is employed by Bos Dairy to ensure that the feeding program is effecting good production. Hellman called the alfalfa grown locally "the most outstanding hay in the country because of the good drying conditions." It has 20-21 percent protein and 18.5 - 19 percent fiber level. Hay is purchased mostly in the springtime at an average price of \$125 - \$132 per ton. Hellman noted, "We make a special effort to buy really good hay."

Hellman pointed out that Bos is "one of the few farmers in the area who farms." Bos raises sudan and barley on the acreage adjoining his dairy.

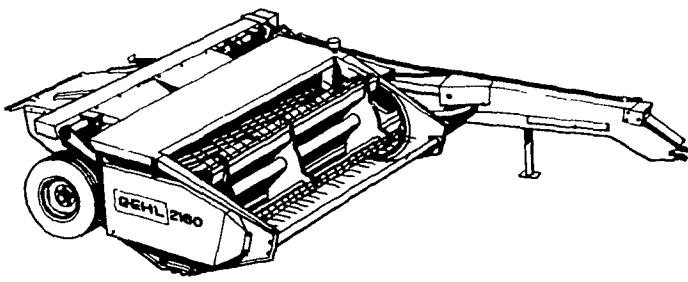
Excelsior Dairy is not only a commercial dairy, but it is also a bull stud, Excelsior Breeders, which served as one of the hosts of the National Association of Animals Breeders' convention with Carnation Genetics. Excelsior Breeders has 8-10 proven sires and about 15 young bulls in their sampling program. It is the home

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Lekker Holsteins is different from most operations in the Chino Valley in that the owners Walt and Bill Lekkerkerker have chosen to remain small with top quality. "Small" means that they milk just 235 cows, and the quality means that they were the top producing herd in the country in 1980. That was when they began three times a day milking. Lekkerkerker says it is difficult to maintain that high production. Their dairy is also one of the few that milks the cows in a face-out, 80-cow flat barn with a pipeline milking system.

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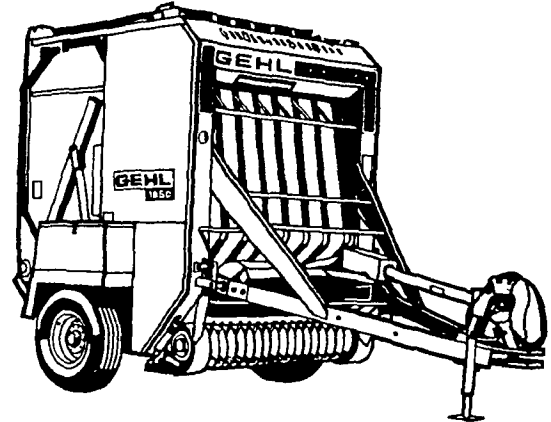
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