

1984 dairying considerations: to reduce...

BY TRISH WILLIAMS

WAKEFIELD — G. Victor Brinton is the type of dairyman that appreciates life on the farm. Although he may not be able to put a price tag on the joy of watching the sunrise over the hills of southern Lancaster County, he does attach a great deal of value to living and working with his family among nature's elements.

Located only a few miles from the Maryland border, the Brinton's Riverview Farm overlooks the Susquehanna River. It's a peaceful existence amidst the narrow wooded glens and hills. With a farm lane nearly a quarter of a mile long that fronts on the sparsely traveled Riverview Road, one is very isolated and could become quite independent in their way of thinking.

Yet Brinton feels a very close affiliation with other dairymen and sees himself as an integral part of the nation's dairy industry. As the severity of the nation's milk surplus problem has escalated in the government and public eye, so has the image of the American dairy farmer conversely fallen. Recognizing the detrimental affects this milk surplus problem can have not only on him as an individual producer, but also the dairy industry as a whole, Brinton has decided to reduce his production in 1984.

"Even if am not able to qualify for the Milk Diversion Program, I plan to reduce my production," said Brinton. "The dairy industry is faced with a surplus, which we created, now we have to work to get rid of it."

Brinton moved to Lancaster County with his parents in 1958 from southern Chester County. Today he farms with his wife, Nancy, and their three children, Scott, 19, Beth, 15, and Tim, 13.

Riverview Farms consists of 800

acres of farmland, of which 550 are tillable. The Riverview herd of grade Holsteins has grown over the years to the present level of 110 cows in the milking string. With this much acreage of cropland Brinton grows more than enough feed for his herd of milk cows, replacement heifers and dairy steers.

While farmers in other areas of Lancaster County experienced severe reductions in crop yields this year, Brinton said his yields were average this year. It would almost seem like a temptation then for him to maintain his present level of production.

Desiring to do his part and cut his milk production, Brinton attended the December 20 meeting on the new dairy program at the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster.

Brinton took with him his milk shipping weight receipts, and established his base with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office.

"I wanted to get my base established before there was a rush," said Brinton. "It took almost 45 minutes to just add up all the weights to arrive at my base. At that point I didn't even know if I would be able to take advantage of the program, but I thought I should at least take the first step."

Because his milk production was higher in 1982 than in 1981, Brinton opted to use 1982 as his base year. After multiplying the first quarter's production by 2, and adding that to the production of the remaining three quarters, he established his 15 month base at 1,931,290 pounds of milk.

At home the Brintons used the same mathematical formula to calculate what their herd's production was for 1983. Adjusted to the 15 month period their 1983 production was 2,085,039 pounds of

milk. This is a seven percent increase over their 1982 level of production.

"We would have to reduce our production during the 15 month program by 14 percent just to achieve a seven percent reduction from our base, because we are already seven percent above that base," the Brinton's noted.

Keeping this in mind they used a worksheet to calculate the profitability of contracting to reduce production by seven percent below their base.

The Brintons found that it would not be profitable for them to participate in the program at the seven percent level. They attributed this to the fact they grow all the feed for the herd, they do alot of their own veterinary work and almost all the labor on the farm is supplied by the family.

"We plan to have our accountant go over the figures with us, checking them for accuracy," said Brinton. "It looks doubtful now that it would be profitable for us to participate. Even if we would break even, I think it would be worth contracting, because at least we would be reducing the surplus."



Nancy and Victor Brinton pause a moment as they review production records and calculate the profitability of participating in the Milk Diversion Program.

"Whether we sign a contract or not we plan to cull our herd of 110 by 10 or 12 cows," he said. "Already we have reduced the protein in the ration from 14.5 percent to 13 percent."

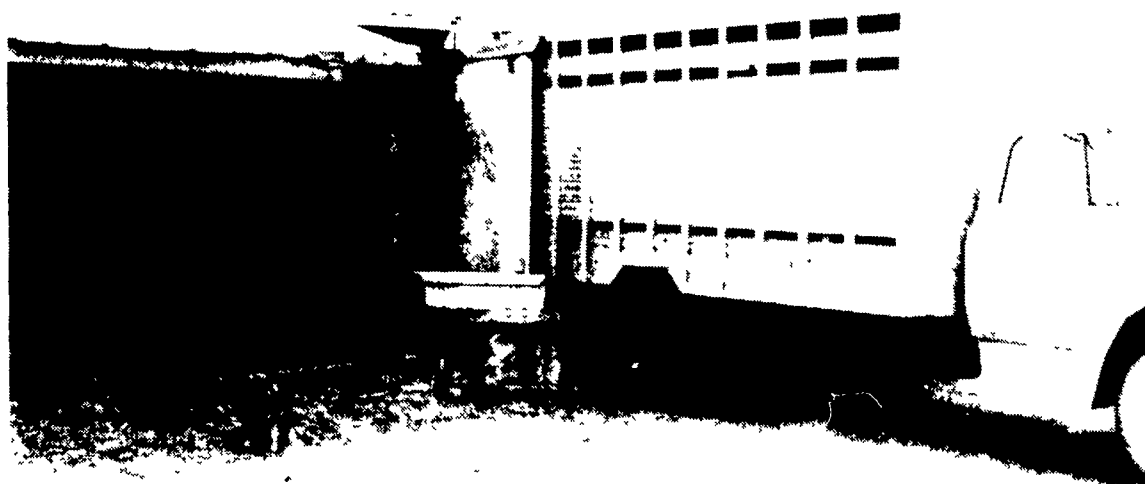


Even on a cold gray day, the hills of southern Lancaster County radiate a sense of peacefulness.



The Riverview herd is housed in a freestall barn.

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Cull cows to be sent to slaughter are loaded on a cattle truck at Riverview. The cows are being culled in an effort to reduce production and subsequently the milk surplus.



Victor Brinton milks his herd of Holsteins in this double eight herringbone milking parlor.