

Elmview Dairy Farm finds success in selling All-Jersey milk products



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COLUMBUS — Marketing is certainly the buzzword of the dairy industry today. It is becoming increasingly evident that the success of the dairy industry depends upon increased merchandising of the product. Many are seeking answers to these problems but few have found total success.

The Curtis family of Warren county have proved the success is possible when it comes to marketing milk. They currently sell all the milk produced by their 220 Jerseys and find it necessary to purchase additional milk to meet the demand! Many factors and much hard work have gone together to create this success, but they stand as proof that it can be done.

Carleton Curtis, 89, is the pillar behind this operation. Sixty-five years ago he was working as a milk tester in Crawford county. He located a Jersey herd and told his family if he could bring his Jerseys along he would come home. It took him three days to move his herd from Meadville to Columbus — he

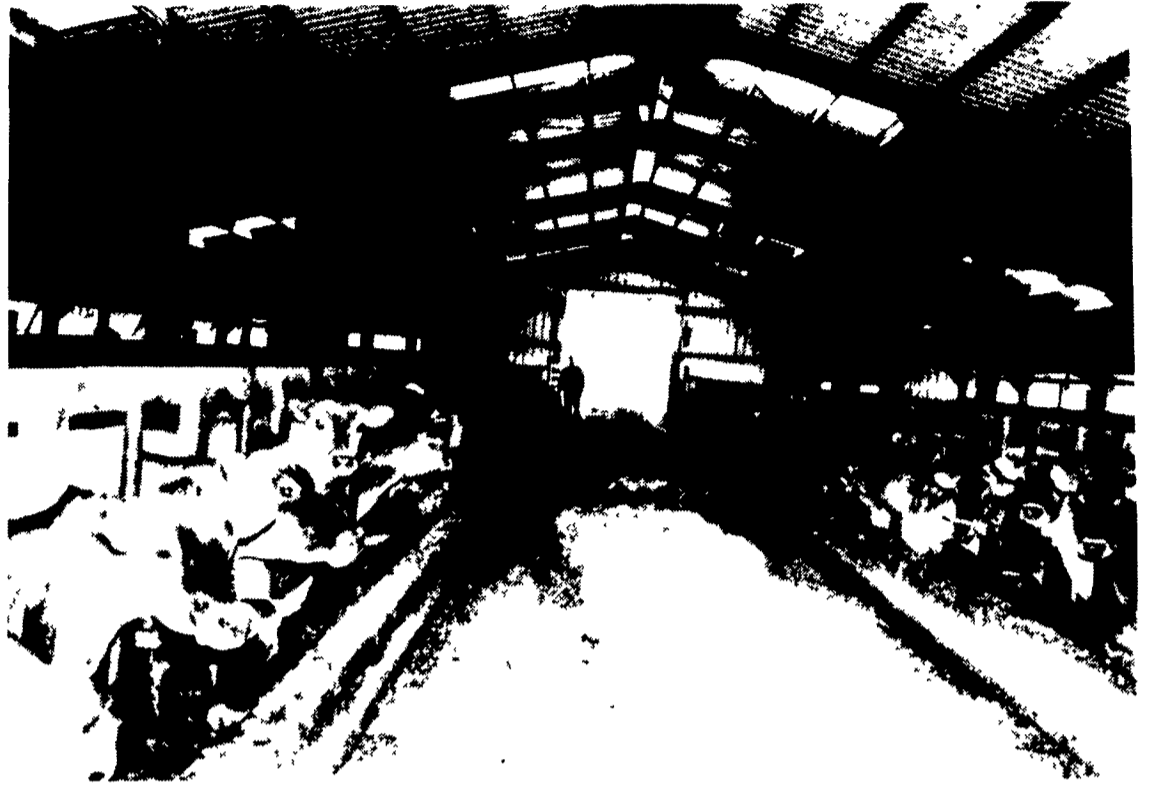
moved the herd on foot. This farmstead has now been in the Curtis family for over 130 years.

Still active on the farm, Carleton does all of the calf feeding, gardens and spends much time at the dairy store on the farm. Until two years ago, he was also involved with field work.

In 1968 his four sons purchased the farm from him. Currently, only three of the sons are owners. The 800-acre farm, of which 350 are tillable, lies in the famous "snow belt" of northern Pennsylvania. Most of the acreage is utilized in producing corn silage. All grain used on the farm is purchased. Les Curtis is responsible for the machinery and field work.

This herd of Jerseys produces milk that is well-known in the Columbus area. A processing plant is located on the farm in which Harold manages the production of several different milk products and butter. In the 1970's their sales were covered by two delivery trucks and four routes for home delivery service. A neighbor began a milk bottling business which forced them to consider new ways to market their product.

Drive-through free-stall barn



Les Curtis stands in the drive-through free stall barn which houses the Elmview Jersey herd.

Curtis family by sign



Family is important in this operation. The Les Curtis family includes, from left, son Larry, Bill Kalika and Pam Curtis Kalika holding Kimberly, Thelma and Les.

They began selling milk from a small salesroom on the farm. The success of this endeavor convinced them to build a store nearby 10 years ago. They found that one clerk could sell more milk than all of the home delivery routes. This was indicative of the trend that young people are willing to drive in order to buy a high quality product for a better price. The Curtis family found that the older people who weren't willing to drive were also consumers of less milk.

Eventually, when Jim moved away from the farm, the home delivery was stopped. At the same time new market opportunities were pursued in local supermarkets. Currently Elmview markets its dairy products in four supermarkets, local restaurants, Dairy Queens and parochial schools. A decision was reached recently to drop the public school contracts.

What has led to a rate of success which has resulted in an increase in business every year since the 1950's? The taste is one factor. Families who began drinking All-

More of Curtis clan



More of the Curtis family, posing in front of the store, includes, front from left, Mark Curtis and Chris; back from left, Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Curtis, and Tim.

Double-eight herringbone parlor



A double-eight Herringbone milking parlor is used to milk Elmview's 220 cows. Larry Curtis, back, and Lee Curtis represent the third generation to be involved in the family business.

Jersey milk find that their "kids love it," and if a customer sticks with it for two or three months they probably won't change.

Much effort is put into controlling the quality of the product. Silage is fed prior to milking which results in better tasting milk. Recently, the Curtis family began providing processed dairy products to a neighboring business. This business saw a 300 percent increase in sales from October 1983 to March 1984, which is claimed was a direct result of changing to Jersey milk.

The demand for Elmview Jersey Farm's All-Jersey Milk is so great that the Curtis family is currently buying about 1,000 gallons of milk every three weeks to meet the demand. In a day when the dairy industry is trying to find ways to handle surplus milk, Elmview is

trying to find ways to meet the demand.

Advertising is also an important part of the overall program at Elmview. Efforts are focused on local newspapers and radio stations. Also sponsored is a local cookout for which they provide hamburgers and milk products. This event gets people to sample their products. The county dairy princess is brought into the store once or twice a year as an additional promotion.

The Curtises hope to be able to get a refund of the 15-cent per hundredweight that is being deducted for advertising. "We advertise and sell all of our products. It's not fair that we get taxed again to sell someone else's products, too," Les says.

Elmview's "All-Jersey Milk" (Turn to Page A24)