

***** Pennfield Dairy News *****

Less Crop Farming — More Time for Dairy



Joshua Yoder enjoys milking Starla, one of his fine, home-bred first calf heifers. Starla freshened at 1-11 and is projected at 15,554 pounds of milk and 753 pounds of fat. On her June 16 DHIA test, she was 201 days in milk and tested 52.52 pounds of milk with 4.9 percent butterfat.

BELLEVILLE— A few years ago, Mifflin County dairyman Joshua Yoder took a gamble which he originally thought would hurt his operation. Farming some 180 crop acres in corn and alfalfa, a portion of that rented, Yoder dropped his acreage down to 85 tillable and 35 in pasture when the rented land was sold.

The change in acreage would mean a change in the feeding program, and this was a factor which Yoder thought would cause problems. On the contrary, however, the change meant that Yoder was able to put in more time with his animals.

"Since we're not farming as much, we can spend more time with the cows," he explained. "We started feeding grain three times a day and I think it's paying off."

In addition to the grain ration which is a blend of Pennfield's new Hi-Yield fat added pellets and flaked feed, the Yoder-Crest herd, located near Belleville, also gets two times per day feeding of haylage, corn silage and baled hay. All rations are hand fed.

"What we're doing is giving them less each time and feeding them more often," Yoder said.



Rebecca Yoder feeds one of the young heifers -- paying attention to the young replacements gets them off to a good start.

"They don't stall (stop eating) near as quick and they eat more."

Yoder's wife, Rebecca, added another observation of the new feeding system. "They're able to digest better," she said of the animals, "and we've had fewer stomach problems with the cows."

The benefits of the new feeding program, coupled with the added attention the cows now receive, are seen in the

herd's production average. In 1982, the 50 registered Holsteins recorded a rolling herd average of 17,469 pounds of milk, 653 pounds of fat and a 3.7 percent fat test. The average for 1983 increased dramatically to 18,669 pounds of milk, 701 pounds of fat and a 3.8 percent fat test.

Aside from the growing herd average, the benefits of the



Joshua and Rebecca Yoder are pictured here with daughter Ruby, and sons Marvin, left, and Fred.

system are also evident in individual production records. For example, the Lana cow produced 22,227 pounds of milk after never having topped 17,000 pounds.

Yoder also credits his herd's improvement to excellent calf crops, which are mainly Rebecca's responsibility. "If you set a calf off to a good start, that's about the best thing you can do," he said.

All calves on the Yoder farm are housed in hutches soon after birth. They remain there for eight to 10 weeks and receive close attention to assure a proper start. This provides a solid base of young cows.

Following up on calf management is the breeding program. Yoder said he prefers to stick with his own stock, as less than a dozen cows on the farm carry a prefix other than Yoder-Crest. However, he added, he likes to "go out and buy a good cow every now and then."

At one time, Yoder said he rented bulls, but for the past three or four years all breeding has been done through artificial insemination. The herd currently has one cow rated Excellent, 14 Very Good, 19 Good Plus and 16 Good.

The Excellent cow, Boots, is a 9-year-old projected at 25,000 pounds of milk and 861 pounds

of fat. She has produced over 100 pounds of milk a day for four straight months.

Since changing his feeding program to Pennfield's high performance complete dairy feed, Yoder decided to sell the ear corn he harvests off about 10 acres of his land. "I would have fed the corn, but the cows were doing so good on the commercial feed that I hated to switch back again," he explained.

The remainder of the 40-acre corn crop is chopped into silage and stored in three silos on the farm, which are normally filled at the end of the harvest.

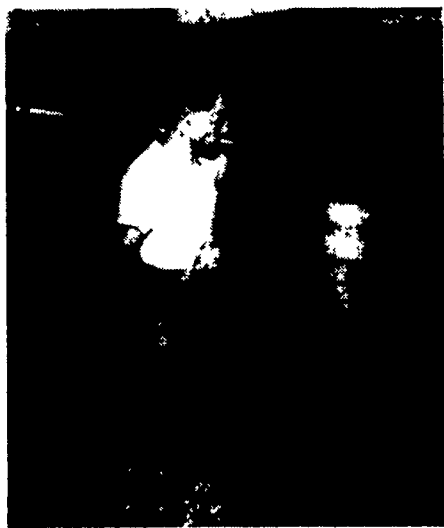
In addition to the crops, the family makes sure it has home grown vegetables year-round. A small garden is kept next to the house where Mrs. Yoder plants strawberries, many of which are given away to relatives and friends. The remainder of the other crops are canned for the winter.

Joshua and Rebecca Yoder have been married for 28 years and have six children, three of whom still help on the farm. Fred works fulltime with the cows, while Marvin, who is employed by a breeding service, helps out part time.

Ruby, the only daughter, is a high school student who also has a strong dairy interest. She has shown cattle as a 4-H'er and has done well at both local and district shows.



Taking time to milk the cows correctly pays big dividends, and this is something Fred Yoder realizes as he milks the cows in the Yoder-Crest herd.



Marvin weighs each cow's high energy grain ration. Over feeding grain can hurt production and is very costly.



Ruby shows her 4-H project, Kenwoody Very Violin.