

Expansion and innovation

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offers Kevin, includes high moisture corn, soybean meal, a commercial mineral mix, a buffer, salt, and haylage. He says they don't skimp on minerals and do pay close attention to the forages, testing whenever the feed seems to change. Usually, adds Kevin, they are feeding out of three structures.

The cows are fed haylage and corn at the first feeding, and minerals and shelled corn at the next. In total, they are fed five times a day.

The "structures" he refers to are nine Harvestores that form a landmark in the valley. The Schrack maintain an award-winning cropping program that includes proper harvesting and storage for high quality feeds.

Schrack says he believes that sealed storage reduces feed loss and give a better feed. They've put up one Harvestore just about every two years since 1966. "It was hard to make the decision for the first one — it cost \$14,600 with the unloader. But today you can't even buy the unloader by itself for \$14,000," notes Schrack.

In 1979 Schrack was recognized for having the top alfalfa yield in

the state by the Pa. Forage and Grassland Council. That year he harvested 9.2 tons hay equivalent while the average contestant's yield was only 5.8 tons. Lack of a county agent has prevented Schrack from entering the competition in the past few years, but he's still taking off top yields.

"With 500 acres of alfalfa, it takes a lot of labor, but it's critical to get it in at the right time," says Schrack. Until the heavy dews and morning fog burn off in the valley, sometimes they must harvest 50 acres of haylage between 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.

All the alfalfa harvested is made into haylage. "We try to go into the winter with full structures," says Schrack. They raise all their own feed, with the exception of the soybean meal and minerals.

The rolling herd average for their herd is 16,154 pounds milk and 579 pounds butterfat. "That isn't too spectacular," admits Schrack. "I guess we've reached the point where we need to cull off for production increases."

"We give the first calf heifers too much of a chance to show what they can do," he adds. Currently, every heifer is raised and added to

the production line as the operation expands.

While some of the heifers may be pulling down the herd average, the cows in the "super high group" are easily holding their own. Projected lactations on some of the Schrack's top individuals are well into the 20,000 pound range. And good breeding accounts for part of the success in production.

"I've used AI since the beginning," says Dan Schrack. "For the past 18 years we've been breeding our own cows." All the semen that is purchased is from bulls that are at least +1500 on the milk production factor. "We're mainly interested in production," he adds, "in it for the milk."

To make milk they also have an extensive herd health program that's based on preventive medicine, says the younger Schrack. Getting a professional hoof trimmer, vaccinating two times a year, and having the veterinarian do pregnancy checks are just a few of the practices that keep the herd healthy. "And we don't try to save money by buying from the route salesman," he adds. "We get 98 percent of our medicines through the vet."

The family is also literally "tuned in" to their herd. A few

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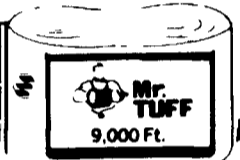


The Schrack herd is housed in a series of free-stall barns and divided into five production groups for feeding.

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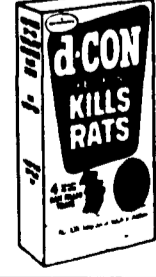
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