

Bixlers convert chicken house to dairy barn... and save \$100,000

MAYTOWN — Not too many dairymen like to consider the prospect of rebuilding after a disastrous barn fire.

There's the lost stock, the lost production, the lost time investment in developing a good milking string, in addition to all the damage to equipment and

buildings.

For Jay Bixler and family, all that and more can be said for the fire that swept through their dairy barn earlier this year.

The Bixlers lost 27 cows and 27 heifers in the fire, which also destroyed a lot of equipment and left only a skeleton of the barn.

It took six months, but the Bixlers are back . . . back in production in a way that both the family, and their suppliers are proudly displaying to the public.

With the help of Harvestore Systems Dealer Penn Jersey Products, Inc., of New Holland, the Bixlers will host an open house Thursday, Dec. 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

What visitors will see is modern-looking stanchion-barn dairy facility . . . that started life as a chicken house.

With the help of the New York State designing firm, Agri-Designers and Consultants, Inc., Bixlers converted the unused poultry housing into an up-to-date dairy barn with 102 stanchions.

And, in the process, they saved at least \$100,000 over the cost required to construct a new dairy barn at the site of the old one.

"We thought other dairymen should see what Jay has done," said Penn Jersey salesman Bill Wingenroth. "He worked with what he had, and the results are outstanding."

What's more, the former 12,000-layer chicken house, which was retired from poultry production in July 1984, is just a start on the rebuilding process at the Bixler operation.

Future plans call for a much larger barn, and other facilities to handle feed. But all are in the plans.

"They looked over the whole operation, and gave Jay a blueprint that coordinates what he has done with what he wants to do in the future," said Wingenroth.

Right after the fire, Wingenroth

noted, Bixler was besieged by salesmen who wanted to rebuild for him. But after a few days to take stock, Bixler wisely chose to undertake a serious study of the entire operation.

In addition to the consulting firm from New York, Bixler worked with County Agent Glen Shirk and several other consultants from

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What once was a chicken house...is now a thoroughly modern dairy barn.



Penn Jersey Products salesman Bill Wingenroth stands with Jay and Martha Bixler in front of the Bixlers' new dairy barn, which formerly was a chicken house.

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