

# How 'bout a dunk tank for dairymen's frustrations?

**Editor's Note** — With a diversion plan completed in 1985, and a whole herd buyout slated for this year, correspondent Joyce Bupp talked to a variety of farmers about the frustrations, temptations and confusion which await those who participate in this latest attempt by Uncle Sam to limit milk production. Here is her sometimes whimsical account.

BY JOYCE BUPP  
Staff Correspondent

**HARRISBURG** — If local dairyman could have their way, the thickest crowds at the Farm Show might not be at the baked potato or milkshake lines....not at the pileup around the hatching baby chicks or water-slide ducklings....not even the mass of humanity milling between barn and arena where livestock exhibitors must push, pull and pray their once-manicured entries through the melee.

No sir. Rumors are that what would draw far and away the longest line would be a "dunk tank" for the use of frustrated dairy farmers.

This would be not just any pitching-arm practice dunk tank. This dunk tank would offer dairymen a chance to lob rocks at a silo-roof-sized target, plunging recent government dairy programs into a milk tank of icy-cold surplus milk. Or maybe into the seemingly bottomless pit holding the CCC surplus powder.

First on the list of prime dunking candidates would be the creators of the 15-month diversion program. Fifteen months: just long enough for participants to relegate breeding size heifers to the back lot, fatten them up for an additional year, then shove them into the milk string, power-packed to crank out the 12 percent increase in production.

"Too short!" scream dairy farmers, who might ante up the pre-diversion price of a hundredweight of Class I for a chance to lob a boulder at that target.

Next on the dunk seat would be the writer who composed the regulations that governed the

handling of slaughter cows under diversion culling.

"Too loose!" accuse producers, willing to maybe slap down another hundredweight's worth for a crack at that target.

Especially heavy rocks are sharpened for that whispered-about operator trading under the name Cal Jocki. Cal bought cattle here and there, reselling wherever a buyer would willingly strike a "real" bargain or a "good deal"—no questions asked.

Tales circulate wherever dairymen gather for 20-20 hind-sight diversion debates about incidents where old Bessie was trucked to market, earmarked for slaughter, then turned up under an assumed number in some other herd—either knowingly or unknowingly.

Another pile of rocks waits for guys like Mick Multiherd. Mick maintains who knows how many dairy herds, scattered across county and state lines, with zero cow records maintained on these far-flung operations. Mick's trailer tires are reportedly bald from hauling cows from diversion-program herd units to others not signed up the program.

Not to forget Sly Slick. Clever Sly is already running through his cagey mind the vague guidelines publicized to date on the new herd buyout anticipating loopholes he can wriggle a pipeline through.

And so, held in reservation - at least until the final, detailed regulations on the 1985 Farm Bill's herd buyout program - is a seat for USDA.

For dairymen are pleading: Will the Department of Agriculture remember the lessons learned through the diversion "cure" to the surplus program as they ready herd buyout regulations?

While they gather rocks, just in case, dairymen toss questions:

—What will be a sensible bid per hundredweight on production? Over what period of production history? How soon will the Secretary start accepting and acting on bids?

—Can a dairyman with more

than one herd sign up just one production unit? Suppose none of the herds is tested or records maintained on individuals? Who will monitor which cows go with which herd? How?

—What if a father and son operate together, both owning cattle in the same herd. Dad wants to use the herd buyout to retire. Can they split the cattle under the program, keeping Son's, but sending Dad's to slaughter? What about the young stock all being raised together?

—How about farms that only milk cows, but put their young stock out for raising on another place? Must that young stock, keeping some other farmer in business raising heifers, be sent off to the beef auction?

—How many years will it run? Three? Four? Five? Suppose the program is announced for five and some highly-unlikely disaster

creates a milk shortage early in year four? Would cows continue to go for beef?

Over how long a period will the payments be stretched? Can a participant opt to take a lump sum payment to invest in Atlantic City slot machines if he so chooses?

—Who will police the buyout program? With what punishments for abusers?

—And this final biggie: Will the program be so bureaucratically burdensome and complicated in compliance that only the absolutely most desperate dairyman will even give it serious consideration?

One final dunk target is already taking some preliminary practice hits: biotechnology. Chemical and hormonal developments that promise unprecedented production increases have some dairymen as jittery as a heifer in the milking string for the first time.

Such developments as isoacids

and bovine growth hormones could prove big spoilers for any production reduction program - and eventually shove the dairy surplus to even greater levels.

Farm Show officials have long tossed about ideas on how to raise funds to help finance the popular January ag expo, considering everything from gate receipts collected at the doors (too many doors) to charging for evening programs to the now familiar parking fees.

By Farm Show, 1987, the dairy industry might have a firmer handle on programs dealing with the increasingly monumental mountain of milk.

But if there aren't some satisfactory answers to the tough questions being pondered today by dairymen, a dunk tank for farmer frustrations could prove to be a real moneymaker.

## All roads lead to the Show

**HARRISBURG** — All roads lead to the Farm Show January 12-17, but some roads may give visitors an easier time, according to Farm Show Director Horace Mann. Mann today provided some traveler tips on avoiding traffic complications during the annual agricultural exposition.

Mann said that construction on the Cameron Street road project in Harrisburg could cause delays for show patrons, but he added that a number of alternate roads could be used to reach the show, which annually plays host to a half million visitors.

The Director advises Farm Show visitors to use Route 81 (Exit 23, Cameron Street) and the Route 22 Bypass to access the 60 acres of paved parking directly adjacent to the Farm Show Complex. The River Relief Route (Routes 22 - 322) also provides direct access to Cameron Street and the Farm Show. Parking in the lot is \$2 per car.

Mann said entrances to the Farm Show parking lot are located

in Elmerton Avenue (three lanes of access) and Cameron Street (two lanes directly across from the Agriculture Building.) He said traffic would exit at three gates located on Maclay Street, Cameron Street and Elmerton Avenue.

The Farm Show Director also reminded Show visitors that additional parking is available at the

Harrisburg Area Community College just off Elmerton Avenue. Free shuttle bus service is provided by the Farm Show Commission from the College to the main entrance of the Complex.

Traffic control is an extremely complicated matter during the event. To facilitate movement, the Pennsylvania State Police will provide traffic control units around the Complex.

## Spickler Ayrshires

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walk around the barns and check out the competition. In fact, Angela says the dairy barns are her favorite place at Farm Show, and she'll spend most of her time there. Her brother, on the other hand, looks forward to going to the implement buildings and looking at all those shiny, new pieces of farm equipment.

This year the Ayrshire show begins at 11 a.m., which gives

commuters like the Spicklers a little extra time to arrive in Harrisburg and get their animals ready for the show.

And so, the countdown begins. The Spicklers will wash and brush and lead their animals intensely as they get ready for the show. They will also be hoping for some good weather, to make traveling between home and the Show less of a concern.

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