

Adams Co. Couple Commit Future To Registered Holsteins

(Continued from Page A1)

noted that while their dairy passed the facility, they really encouraged them to consider other arrangements. Mary Kay emphasizes that the barn was built as a tool to help take care of the cows and that the old barn was not good enough for the herd they have assembled now. She added, "This barn was built for cow comfort. You can't take care of good cows in a parlor and freestall barn. Cows are what its all about here."

The barn was modeled after a Hoard's Dairymen plan that the Roches modified. The stalls measure three different sizes, 4' 6", 4', or 3' 10". All are 70" long and have rubber cow mats in them. The stalls slope 3" from front to rear and the stall platforms are 3" higher than the center aisle.

Their milking system includes the superflow DeLaval claw, a 3" vacuum line, and a 2" vacuum line. The mangers are tiled and the ventilation system directs air across the ceiling. It is supplemented by two 36".

Such an ambitious undertaking requires considerable financial support. Jeff and Mary Kay shopped around for their financing and found they had a friend in Harlan Fricke at CCNB of New Oxford. Explained Jeff, "Word got around about what we were trying to do and he called and just asked to talk to us before we committed ourselves elsewhere. He's a guy who enjoys getting young people started."

Jeff and Mary Kay also realize that they have some other pluses in their favor. Both owned cattle that they brought to the marriage. Jeff

had machinery they could use as collateral and, a commitment from Jeff's dad and brother to sell excess crops to the young couple to feed their large herd, also helped support the plan.

Still, they have approached their financial planning with a sharp pencil. Figuring milk price at \$11.00 per hundred, they figure they must have a 17,000 pound herd average to service their debt load, pay current expenses, and have money for personal expenses. Mary Kay stated that the herd is already at that point and they plan to have the average up to 19,000 in the next year, a level they feel is tops for the best return on their investment.

Management is the key for their success. They feel they have the quality of cattle necessary to support paying a feed bill projected to total about one-third of their milk receipts. Roches feed their cows a 17% commercial feed mix from Spangler and Sprengle Feeds.

Cows milking over 65 pounds daily receive a top dressing of Protek pellets. A timothy-alfalfa mixed hay is fed in the barn four times a day and each cow receives 38 pounds of corn silage per day. 20 acres of the Roches acreage is devoted to pasture and the cows are turned out daily, weather permitting.

A quick inventory of sires in the milking string surfaces such names as Chairman, Mars Tony, Enhanser, and Bell. But Mary Kay notes that their breeding program centers on longevity, functional type traits and production, in that order. She stated, "Any bull mated right can produce a good daughter." Added Jeff, "When we mate a cow, we look first at what type traits we want to correct. Then we look at test. One of the last things we look at is milk. We have cows with the potential to milk."

The Roches plan to use Select Sires bulls extensively in their breeding program. Mary Kay sup-

ports this since she feels, "Select Sires has the best selection of bulls with the most reliable proves."

As methodical as they are in their breeding program, the Roches have been even more particular about the kind of cattle they have chosen for foundation stock. Explained Jeff, "We're fussy when we buy. A cow has to have a pedigree for us to even consider her." Added Mary Kay, "There are too many cows out there to buy just any cow. You don't have to pay top dollar for them all the time either."

They point out that one of their best buys was a cow they bought for \$1,100.00 that came home to make 25,000 pounds of milk and is now scored Excellent. They've tried to keep their purchase price between \$1,200.00 and \$1,600.00.

This young couple also has plans to capitalize on their registra-

tion papers. Notes Jeff, "You can't get by in this business just selling milk. You have to look at merchandising." Already they've sold cattle to California and have been approached about consigning to the State Convention Sale. Season their merchandising program with their debut in the showing this summer which netted them the Grand Champion ribbon at the South Mountain Fair, and you have the first fruits of their promotional efforts.

Even before their stall barn was completed, Jeff and Mary Kay started discussing other projects still on their drawing board. They plan to build a hay storage building and a manure storage facility. Their plans and commitments might discourage some people, but Jeff and Mary Kay Roche are dedicating a life-time to make their dreams come true.

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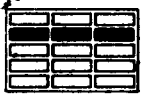
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