

How Richlawn Farms Broke T



Calf mortality, according to Robert, is less than one percent on the Richlawn Farms. Smyers have used calf hutches for over ten years, feed soured colostrum and wean calves at three weeks old. Hutches are closed in with chicken wire because birds in the past have gotten into the pens.

BY PAT PURCELL

YORK — When Rodney and Robert Smyser of York County joined Richlawn Farms with their father, Richard, they had a problem.

"Our biggest problem was improving on an already excellent record Dad had and he had been farming for fifty years," said Robert.

Richard milked around 36 cows, but added 30 in 1971 when Rodney joined the farm. By 1978 their average was up to 19,600 pounds of milk with 741 pounds of butterfat. While that average was good, Rodney and Robert wanted more milk, but could not break the 20,000 pound barrier.

Rodney and his father formed the original partnership in 1970 and built on to the barn in 1971. Robert joined in 1974. Today the Smyers' total head is approximately 200 registered Holsteins. They raise all their own replacements. The bull calves are castrated for steers and fattened to sell for beef.

Smyers latest DHIA figures for January put milk production at 24,225 pounds, test and 864 pounds of butterfat.

"Four of our cows have an estimated production of over 30,000 and 21 are estimated at over 25,000, according to the latest DHIA records," stated Rodney.

While an average of 20,000 pounds per cow milk production would be enough for many dairy farmers, Robert and Rodney were determined to break 20,000 pounds and that determination paid off. They changed their feeding program nearly two years ago. By examining the complexities of feeding high-producers and making some changes they have increased milk production from 20,615 pounds and butterfat from 760 pounds in 1985 to 22,500 pounds and 792 pounds butterfat in 1986. In 1987 milk production average per cow was 23,829 pounds and 827 pounds butterfat and the last DHIA report was 24,225 pounds of milk and 864 pounds of butterfat as of January 1988.

"We were feeding a flake feed and grain mix and I think we were feeding a little too much grain," said Rodney.

They started on a high-protein, high-energy top dressing to cows producing 80 pounds and above daily. Some of their cows received the top dressing three to four months and several of their cows earned that bonus for most of their lactation period.

The top dressing is Master Mix ProTek 1890 pellets. Robert's wife, Lisa, for six years has been the District Sales Manager for Master Mix. When the top dressing is used, they cut down on the grain fed and feel the high-producers are actually eating more

grain.

"We also feed some Iso-Plus. To pay for itself you need a two-pound increase and I think we've seen a three to four pound increase," explained Robert.

They have recently added a Microbial Feed Additive within the past two months. They are testing its effect on milk production by giving it to half the milking herd and have seen a two to three pound increase. Although Robert and Rodney may not agree on everything in their partnership, they do agree that they are never satisfied to level off in milk production.

"We always want to produce more milk," said Rodney.

Cows are fed grain three times a day, corn silage twice; haylage once and hay twice. If they had more hay Rodney said they would feed it again.

"The more often you feed the cows the better they digest it. We like to spread out the grain and get more in them. Butterfat improves when fed hay first in morning," said Robert. "We used to feed hay and then grain immediately after hay. Now we feed hay and wait about an hour. They have something course in their rumen. After



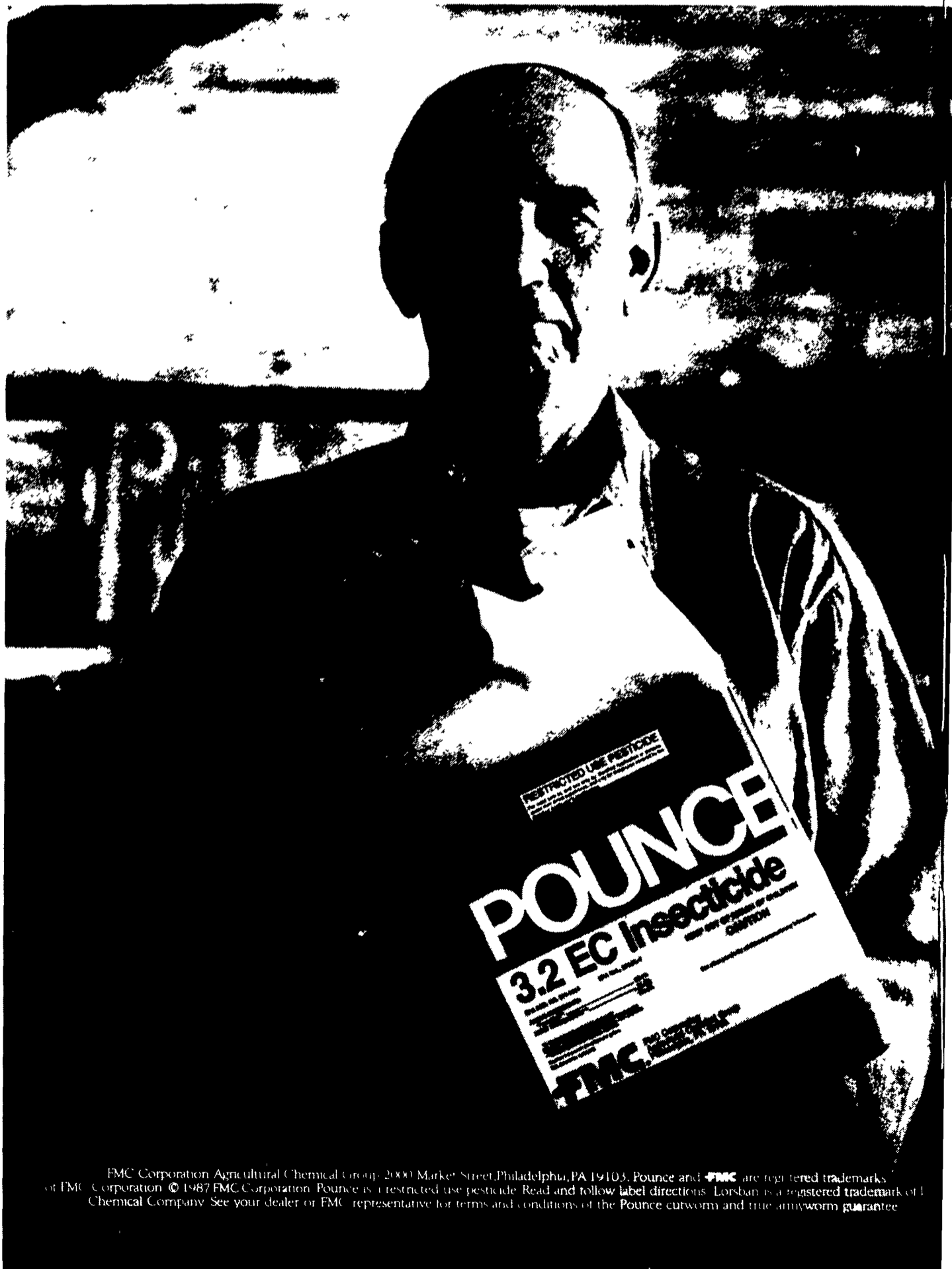
Robert, Joyce and Rodney Smyser of Richlawn Farms program for their registered Holsteins nearly two years ago. Latest DHIA figures of January 1988 show 20,615MP and 760F. Latest DHIA figures of January 1988 wonder they are smiling.

breakfast we feed them corn silage and then grain and the Master Mix same time as we feed grain.

The Cobactin, the microbial feed additive is sprayed on the corn silage and the IsoPlus is fed at the same time.

Curbing Mastitis Problems

A high somatic cell count can cut milk production. Their SCC falls regularly between 200,000 to 250,000 and they are not happy about that. They use individual paper towels, teat dip and dry treat



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