Green Acres Farm

their attention on getting that 20-cent premium. They may not always get it, says Walter, but that is their constant goal.

General cleanliness is the key to consistently earning quality premiums. That only comes from doing a lot of things right — not just one or two. It's not so much what they do at Green Acres Farm, but how they do it.

The Hopkins farm 500 acres in corn, 250 acres in alfalfa and the rest in double crop rye with corn and small grasses. Their herd of nearly 300 head of registered Holsteins and identifiable grade Holsteins reached a rolling herd average of 19,900 pounds with 780 pounds of butterfat. The milking parlor is a double-six herring bone setup. Total head at Green Acres Farm is nearly 630.

They house 280 cows in a freestall barn built to accomodate a 180-head. That feat takes some manuevering and good management.

"Cows do not lie in the alleys because we feed five times a day and I think that keeps them up and exchanging places," said Walter.

Walter admits there is a price to pay for the overloading and that is extra work to keep the bedding fresh. "But it's worth it to us and we are willing to do that," said Walter. "Because we overload the free stall barn it's important to keep the stalls in top shape. We tend the stalls at least three times a day," said Walter.

The beds are dirt and sloped slightly uphill, because cows prefer to lie uphill. The Hopkins bed with recycled sawdust from a near by horse farm.

Just the words 'recycled sawdust' makes a farmer scratch his head and raise his eyebrows and he questions the wisdom of the farmer who uses recycled bedding of any kind. But with Hopkins quality record, they're doing every thing right.

"It is exceptionally clean and the horse farmer is glad to be rid of it. We load it from piles, bring it here and mix lime in it - 80 pounds of lime per 30 free stalls once a week," explained Walter.

"The sawdust is kiln dried. That's most important no matter how clean the reused bedding might be," said Walter. "The sawdust must be kiln dried."

Bedding can be freshened as often as they like because the bedding is free so there's no thought to costs. Before finding the recycled bedding, Walter was spending as much as $300 a month and sometimes more.

Walter remodeled the barn and parlor in 1976 and added the low line. Automatic takeoffs were installed three years ago along with sprayers. Walter sets the takeoffs to the level of desired dryness. Getting the last drop of milk is not as necessary as keeping the udders in good condition.

"I wanted to improve udder quality and lower our somatic cell count, and keep our milking to a one-man operation. With the system we had before, one man had his hands full and two people had time on their hands," said Walter. "Now we milk 50 cows an hour and they do a good job, too."

Although somatic cell count was not high at Green Acres Farm, pre-dipping was a big step forward, according to Walter. A sprayer at every milker takes the place of the pre-dipping cup. The cup is nothing more than an instrument for spreading disease, Walter strongly believes.

Washing is not a part of the milking preparation. "When we first come up to the cow we use our hands to knock off the excess dirt and take two squirts of milk out of each quarter. I insist on stripping the cows before stimulating them to get that high bacteria milk out before it has the chance to be diluted with the low count milk," said Walter.

An iodine solution is sprayed on teats. It stays on for 30 seconds, and paper towels are used to dry the teats completely.

They don't have many hot quarters since they've been pre-dipping. If they have a hot quarter they find it at milking time. But no matter what time it is, 4 a.m. or 4 p.m. Walter is called immediately and the cow is treated. Out of a 300-head herd, Walter may treat one or two cows a month.

"Minutes are very important when treating a hot quarter," said Walter. "We used to find a hot quarter and call the vet. Vet comes the next day. If I've got a cow with a hot quarter, I put her immediately on a I.V. solution prescribed by our vet." Only Walter or the assistant herdsman is allowed to treat the cows.

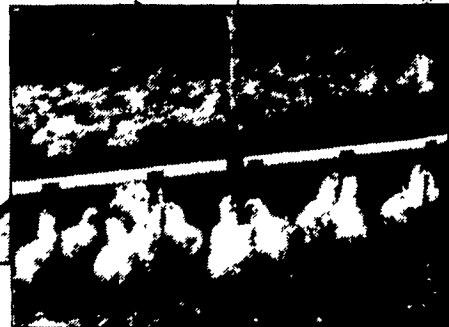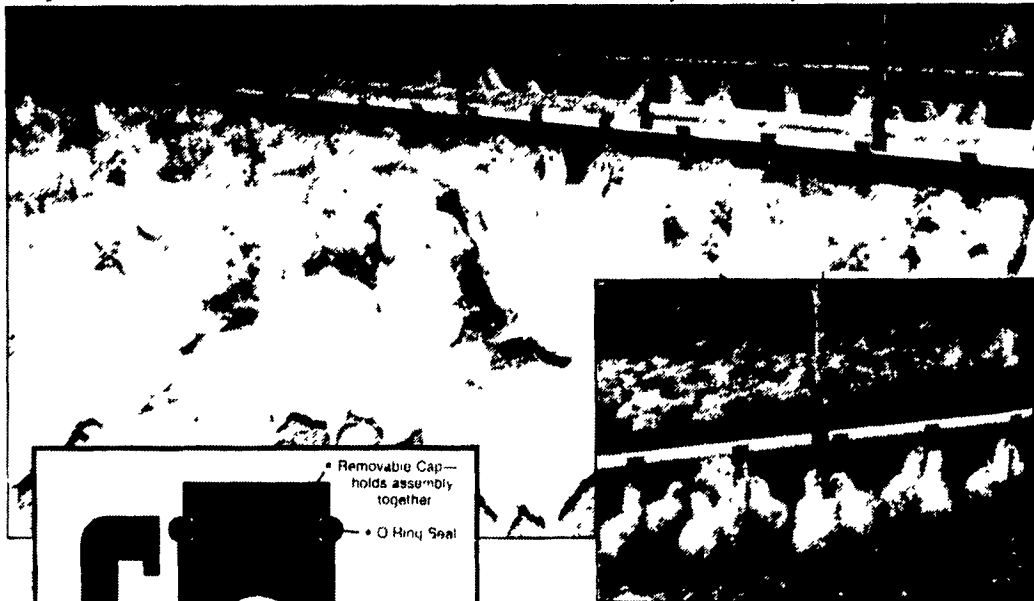Infected cows are milked first because the milking crew is

Feeding five times a day keeps the 280 cows moving around so all are comfortable in the 180-cow freestall barn. Bill Hopkins checks the herd of registered and identifiable grade Holsteins at Green Acres Farm. Herd average is 19,914 pounds and butterfat is 788 pounds.
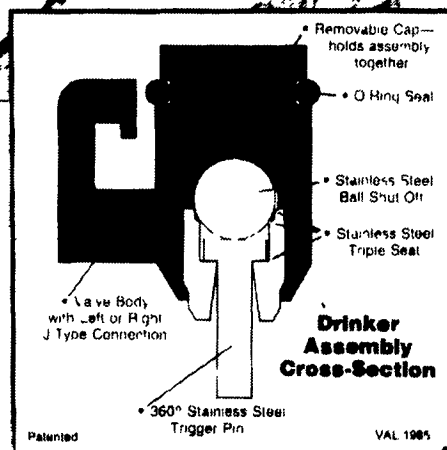

First thing in the morning and the last thing at night — Walter checks the temperature in the milk tank.