



Nelson, the oldest of the two brothers who operate The Weaver Homestead dairy farm, is pleased with their grade cows, which have increased production in response to better forage.

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emergencies since children and household responsibilities keep them busy.

The two-hour shifts are rotated between the brothers and they have hired help for the other.

Their milking schedule allows them to have one weekend, one Sunday, and one Saturday off monthly. The milking schedule allows their evenings to be free for

family and church activities at the Weaverland Mennonite church.

Grade cows

They have grade cows because they aren't interested in marketing. Not having registered cows has not interfered with success.

Nelson said, "Because we have grade cows, I think we make better decisions when it's time to get rid of a cow. When a cow is a dud, it should go even if it is registered."

Over the years, Weaver Home-

stead has earned a reputable name and some farmers have begged to buy some of the Weavers' heifers.

"We have good cows and good production from using balanced rations, good quality forage and good management techniques," Don said.

Reseed alfalfa

Every three years the Weavers reseed alfalfa. They feed high moisture shell corn and no bale hay. They are extremely pleased with the results of using mega lac, a condensed source of energy.

For breeding purposes, they use AI and the best bulls for the money.

Of BST, Don said, "I kind of wish it would go away. We won't be the first to jump on the band wagon. We'll watch the results and reactions of the public. I think it's safe to drink, but to get more milk, you must work the cow harder and a cow can only eat so much. The food would need to be more dense in energy and protein," he paused then turned toward his brother and said, "That's my opinion, what about you?"

Nelson agreed and laughingly remarked, "We get along good because we agree on important issues."

Paper bedding

The Weavers use newspaper paper bedding. Nelson made a

Weaver Homestead

machine to grind it by using a hammermill to grind and blow the bedding into a bin and later the bedding is dropped through a chute into an electric feed cart for distribution.

"I built it for \$1,000 and it shreds finer and more consistent and uniform than others we've seen," Nelson said.

Except for emergencies, Don takes care of most of the health work needed for herd care.

"I work hard to keep the cows happy," he said.

Host visitors

The Weavers also work to keep others happy. Nelson and his wife Joyce are in charge of helping a Russian family resettle in the area. They often host international students and hope someday to reciprocate the visits.

The family also offers farm tours and has enjoyed visits with people from all over the world.

Don's family enjoys music and the girls play the piano and violin. Sports occupy a lot of their time with Nelson playing softball on a

church team, Jenny basketball, Jeana baseball, and Jason, soccer.

Six-year-old Justin, who likes to ride in the cab tractor with his father, said, "I'd rather plow than go to kindergarten."

Linda, Don's wife, is busy with Heidi, 8; Gina, 6; Rita, 3; and D. John, 20 months. Linda shares her love for animals with the children by raising guinea pigs, chickens, rabbits, and fish. A horse is ordered and they look forward to using a three-seated cart they own that is big enough to haul two families comfortably.

Because they enjoy entertaining friends, Don and Linda built a patio to host groups such as Sunday schools and a day camp for 60 kids which Don co-directs.

The adults are pleased with the flexibility that partnership farming allows.

"I didn't want to marry a farmer — especially a dairy farmer because of the long hours involved," Joyce said, "but now I think it's the greatest way to raise a family."



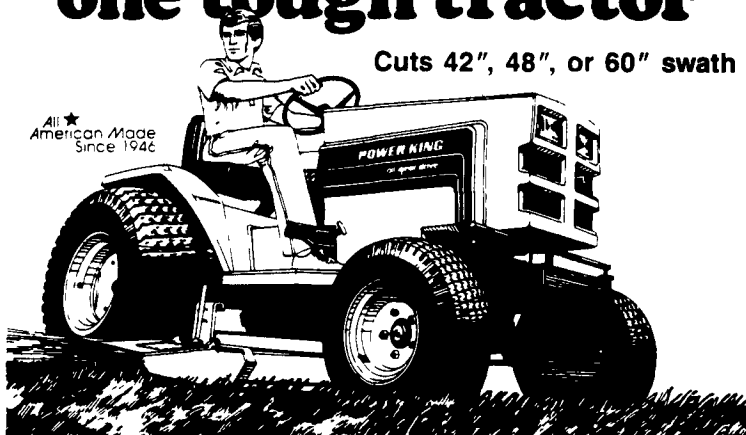
Jeana, 6, and Rita, 3, find these bunnies just the right size for them.

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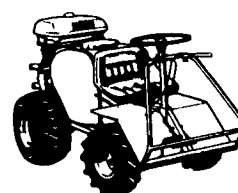
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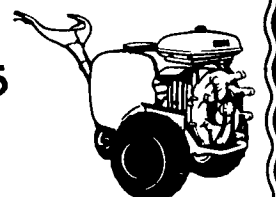
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