

Landhope Farms: We Are The Dairy Of The Future

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KENNETT SQUARE — Every dairyman has his own idea of the perfect farm, but one farm manager is convinced the reality of his operation is the ideal for the future.

Landhope Farms in Kennett Square is the milk production dairy farm by which others will be modeled, according to farm manager Sam Shotzberger.

"There's no question about it, we intend to be the leaders," Sam said recently.

Landhope Farms is one of two large dairy operations in Chester County. They milk about 400 cows, twice a day. They are about to go on a tree-times-a-day schedule.

"Plans are to eventually go to three-times-a-day milking, and expect about a 15-percent increase in milk production. But we need to add some equipment before doing it. It will be done within the next couple of weeks," he said, adding

that they have already hired a man to head the third milking crew.

Currently milking in the double-10 parlor is done with three cow groups — high producing, middle producing and low producing.

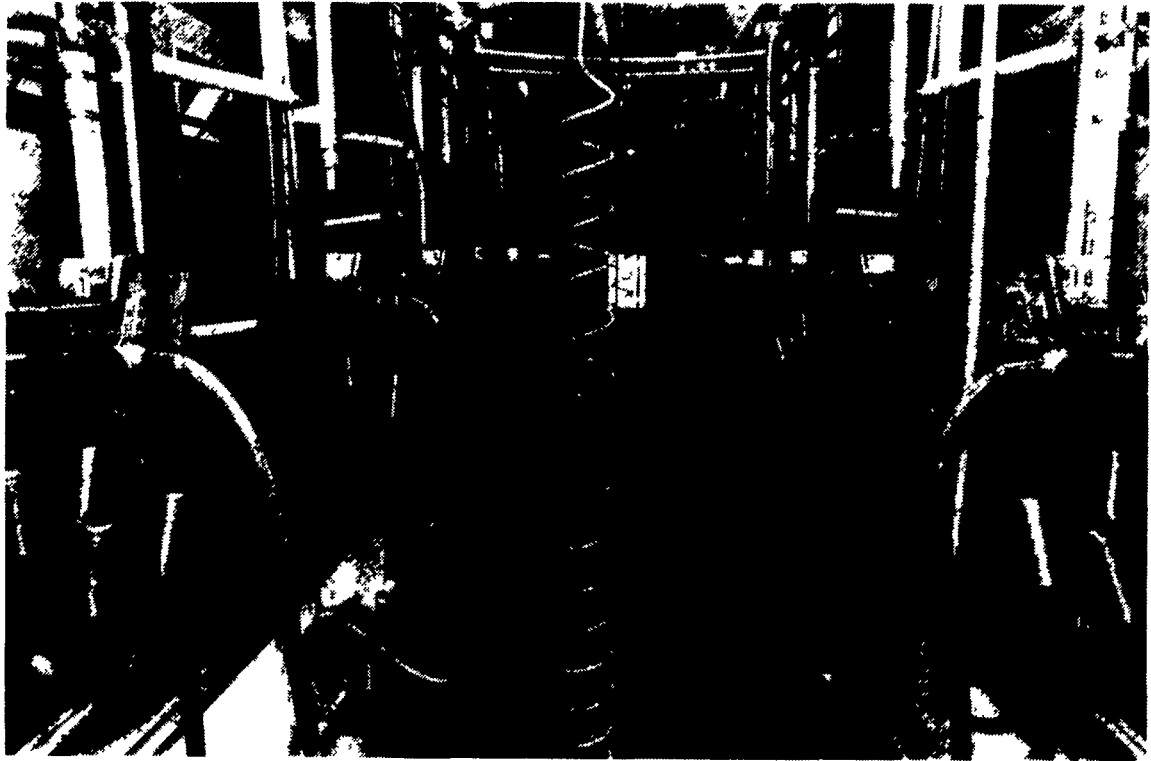
It requires two men about 5½ to 6 hours per milking, from start to cleanup.

The milking is done with two different shifts and weekend duty is rotated.

In addition to the sizable herd of grade and registered Holsteins, the operation has about 800 acres of land — 600 acres for crops, 200 in pasture.

The pasture is used double duty. Sam said they cut hay in the pasture, and that hay is used for dry cows. In early June, they harvested just a little over 200 big square bales from the pasture. The pasture is seeded with grass.

The milk from the cows is directed to a processor and the majority retained at the nearby Landhope Farms dairy store.



This double-10 parlor has been used for 2x milking at Landhope Farms. It is about to be used three-times a day.

Sam is young, in his mid-30s, and energetic. He's new to Landhope, taking the manager position in February. But he's not new to working at large operations or with working with dairy near Landhope.

For someone as eager to strive for excellence in dairying, Sam seems to be in the right place.

Sam and his wife Lisa live in a large brick house next to the main dairy operation. They have a son Ben, 5, and a daughter Aily, 8 months.

If the ideal commercial dairy operation were to be built — one that was on the leading edge of applied technology, effectiveness, and profitability — it would probably look a lot like Landhope Farms, in Sam's opinion.

Now add this in — the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Research Center, a key research facility for dairy animal health, is literally just down the road.

Researchers make weekly trips to the farm to check up on the breeding program, and other aspects of herd health.

Shotzberger knows the researchers well. He used to work for them at New Bolton.

"New Bolton's nutrition teaching program is big key. Just about everything on the farm is related to nutrition," Sam said.

They use five different rations for feeding their cattle, including the 300 heifers they raise for replacements. Sam tries to maintain about a 30 percent culling rate.

Haylage, corn silage, high mois-



Landhope Farm manager Sam Shotzberger shovels up soybean meal left after a tractor-trailer unloaded.

ture corn . . . all are stored in trenches. He gets soybean meal by the tractor trailer load. Also used in the rations are distillers grain, cotton seed, and blood meal, minerals and limestone. All rations are custom mixed and fed to the high group and low group.

Pending approval of building permits, Landhope is about to consolidate its heifer raising area near the main farm. The intent is to build a 328-foot long Virginia-style housing complex with slatted floor, and a manure facility capable of holding from four to six months worth of waste.

While looking over work being done to renovate a large, older, completely walled-in freestall building, Sam said, "I don't think expansion is the plan sought now. Excellence is the goal."

The renovated building is being turned into an airy comfortable freestall capable of housing 100 cows, including dry cow stalls. It will also provide some box stalls

for better freshening conditions, one of the areas that Sam has isolated as requiring improvement.

"My strength is in dairy and what I need most education on is crops. It's important."

But the dairy knowledge Sam brings to the operation has made for some of the changes at Landhope.

They have Virginia style freestall housing and use three bottom lots for heat detection.

"(Heat detection) is a challenge. The problem is, in the past we sat back, now we're developing a strategy to attack.

"The goal is a pregnancy rate of 35 percent during each cycle. In the past we've come somewhat short and in doing so spent too much money. We need to synchronize the whole herd."

He uses a recently promoted regime of prostaglandin shots, heat detection, breeding and more pros-



An interim cooling system was pressed into use at Landhope Farms with the record heat of May and June. The hose along the underside of the rood if perforated. A permanent system is planned.



Sam Shotzberger looks over work being done to renovate a freestall facility.