

Dairy Of Distinction Farm

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eggs in one basket," said Robert R. Gehman.

Gehman said he believes that, sometimes, "when hog prices are high and milk prices drop off, we're not hurting that much," he said.

The farm owes much of its success to hard, persistent work — and credit from the Lord, said Adeline. "If the farmer doesn't get the rain and the sun, your work does no good. It's the Lord that gives you the increase."

Robert Gehman worked on a dairy and beef operation when in high school. It was his experience working for his uncles on their dairy farms that helped him start his own dairy business. In addition, Adeline grew up on a dairy farm (50 acres, 12 cows) in Dublin, Pa., near Doylestown.

Comprises 160 acres

The Marwell Dairy comprises about 160 acres (about 110 tillable). They also farm an additional 900 acres with cash crops in various locations nearby.

The dairy has 80 milk cows (most grade Holstein) and about 70 young stock. Milking times are 5:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., from a

tiestall to a milking pipeline.

Gehman uses a total mixed rations (TMR) system formulated by F.M. Brown.

The DHIA herd average is 17,600 pounds of milk; 675 pounds of fat; and 578 pounds of protein.

Raises hogs

The farm also raises about 1,100 hogs a year. They are sold locally through Leidy's Meats. The swine are obtained from a local farrowing house with 60 head.

They also raise 800 capons for retail and wholesale markets.

The Gehmans also raise about 60 acres of gourds and about 15 acres of spaghetti, butternut, and acorn squash, in addition to 115 acres of ornamental pumpkins. (The pumpkins are maintained — planted, cultivated, and fertilized — for Dan Shantz, a wholesaler. Shantz then harvests them when they are ripe.)

Gehman said the family also maintains an 80-acre field for the St. Francis Academy, a Catholic organization in Bethlehem, and helps harvest a peach orchard and a vineyard.

Lot of farmers

"On my mother's side, there are

a lot of farmers," said Gehman. "And I just always wanted to farm. I can't see people who go to college and don't know what they want to do! I knew what I wanted to do when I was 10 years old."

Gehman said that he knew if he wanted to be a dairy farmer, he needed some "first-hand experience."

"I mean, I took the ag course in school, you didn't learn a whole lot. You got some book knowledge but not that much hands-on experience," he said.

Gehman said, in those days, it was a lot harder to farm. "Those were the days before stable cleaners and silo unloaders," he said. "And I started a quarter after four in the morning and worked till 6-6:30 at night with about a 15-minute break for breakfast and, at most, a half-hour break for lunch. And that was six days a week." Every third Sunday he would have off in the afternoon, but would have to work every Sunday morning.

Combined knowledge

But the combined knowledge and experience of keeping a farm helped in obtaining Dairy of Distinction recognition.

"Our farm sits back from the road," said Adeline. "But we try to keep the grass mowed on either side of the macadam lane."

"What happens on a farm is you tend to not have time to take care of it. It can be very easily neglected," she said.

Adeline said that Robert "is of the calibre that it's not fun working on a run-down place. It's no fun farming it. Some farms never take time for painting buildings or putting in windows."

Appearance up

According to Adeline, the general appearance has been kept up outside the farm as well as in.

"I like to say one thing about my husband, which I think a lot of farmers can learn," she said. "He

always bought things for the house, not only for the farm. He will always buy a refrigerator or something before I even ask for it. A lot of farmers don't spend money for anything that's in the house, because everything has to go into the farm. And that makes dairy farming a lot more fun."

Adeline said that the family

cares about the appearance of the farm. "Not just making a living," she said. "It's no fun living in a run-down place. We know some farmers who never take time to clean up junk or anything. And there's no joy in farming that way. "This earth is God's. You should take the best care of it you can."



The Gehman family with dog, Heldl. From left, Barry; Robert, Sr.; and Robert, Jr.



Barry Gehman, pictured, helps his father manage 80 head of grade Holstein on the Dairy of Distinction farm.



Robert Gehman, right, stands with son Barry at the helper feeder trough on the Marwell Farm.

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