

Sinan's Holsteins Sweep State Production Records

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HOME (Indiana Co.) — Nearly 15 years ago while traveling his milk-hauling route, one of Milos Sinan's customers expressed an interest to get out of the dairy business, and offered to sell Sinan his herd of 30 cows on a monthly payment plan.

Sinan agreed, and added the cows to his own small herd of calves.

Last week the Sinan family learned their Holsteins — now nearly 250 animals — was the top DHIA herd in the state for milk production, butterfat, and protein production. And not only is the Sinan family farm producing some of the best milk in Pennsylvania, it is still actively involved in delivering it to market.

At the Sinan's northern Indiana County farm, a constant wind blows across a half-mile long field and a pond speckled with migrating wild geese before it reaches the complex of neat white barns, silos, and outbuildings.

Commitment has played a major role in boosting the Sinan herd to the top of the DHIA chart: a commitment of time by all five members of the family to work long days and milk three shifts to increase production; a commitment of money to reinvest in the farm's improvement and modernization; and a commitment of caring for the extra comfort of the cows.

Mornings at the Sinan farm begin about 3:30 with Milos, wife Sandy, and daughter Marlane, 20 milking the string of approximately 75 Holsteins. A short time later, sons Mevlan, 23, and Milos, Jr., 21, pull out with two of the family's milk tank trucks to start 11-hour days of hauling milk from 45 farms in Indiana, Armstrong, and Westmoreland counties to Turner Dairy in Penn Hills.

With Milos often spending much of the day in the tractor seat on the farm's 160 acres of corn and 150 acres of alfalfa, Sandy and Marlane handle the 11:30 a.m. milking, and the boys return home in time to help with the chores and the 6:30 p.m. milking.

A grinding schedule, to be sure. But it has paid off.

In the recently-announced year-end DHIA standings, the Sinan's 81.1 cow herd produced an average of 28,331 pounds of milk, 1,075 pounds of butterfat, and 875 pounds of protein, first place in all three rolling herd categories. Those figures represent better than 9 percent increases in each category over the previous year.

"It was a lot of work, but well worth the effort," Milos said.

As the end of the DHIA year approached, Milos said he knew his herd was going to finish near the top.

But then he adds the family is too busy to be overly preoccupied with watching statistics.

When asked if diet or genetics



Sinan family members: left to right, daughter Marlane; son Mevlan (wearing black jacket); Sandy, with calf; son Milos, Jr.; and Milos, Sr.



New manure storage system recently installed.



Milos and Sandy Sinan at feeding time in the new heifer barn.

plays the most important role in his cows' record-setting performance, Milos said, "Everything combined," including "tender loving care."

"But they're really not pampered," he said. "They're just taken care of."

A veterinarian visits the farm twice a month for "herd health," a sort of preventative health care program where cows are randomly examined with special emphasis on pregnancy testing. A hoof trimmer also visits about three times a year.

The silage is evaluated at least monthly, and a lot of weight is placed on recommendations for ration mixture variations made by Vigortone representative Jim

Rengert in Maryland.

"We think he's super," Milos said.

The Sinan's herd was already producing 23,000 pounds of milk when the decision was made to start milking three times a day.

"We saw our cows leaking milk," Milos said. He believes the three-a-day milkings improve overall production, butterfat, and protein production.

"I think it's better for the cows. Some vets will tell you that," he said. "It relieves stress on the cows."

But admittedly it causes some additional stress on the people who have to do the milking.

"Somebody's in the barn here all the time," Milos said. "We're fortunate we have good family help."

Like dairymen all across the state, the Sinan's in the past year have had to adjust to fluctuating prices for their milk. In their case prices have ranged from more than \$16 per CTW to more than \$11 per CTW. He expects the price of milk will continue to go up and down for some time to come.

"Something has to be done to level out the price," he said.

And like most other dairymen, they must cope with being a business which cannot set the price for the product they produce.

"Everything we buy we buy retail," he said. "And everything

we sell we sell wholesale."

In spite of price uncertainties, the physical layout of the Sinan farm has undergone several improvements in recent years.

Three silos have been added since Milos and Sandy moved there 15 years ago. A new heifer barn, garage addition, and manure storage system are other recent improvements. A third line of tie-stalls is being planned for the milking barn to add even more efficiency to the 70-minute milking times.

As for the future, Sandy said the operation may likely grow to 100 milking cows in a year or two, but then she and Milos add the decision to expand will also depend a great deal on the children, and how much time they want to devote to the farm.

Can the Sinan's herd continue to improve and stay at the top of the DHIA charts?

With a laugh Milos said that once anyone is at the top there's only one way to go from there. He also noted herds which have been at the top previously have often dropped several positions in following years.

The Sinan's will have to stay on guard not to become complacent with their accomplishments, he said.

"It's a challenge," Milos said, "We keep pushing . . . We always will."



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