

The Gable Formula: Better Forages = More Milk

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Lancaster Farming Staff
ELVERSON (Chester Co.) — Charles-Don Gable Farm took a good, long look into their farming operations several years ago. In the end, they came up with winning combinations that put more milk in their pipeline.

Those combinations involved using a nutrition service to examine the quality of forages and feed and making necessary adjustments that, this year, made them the most improved Ayrshire dairy. Those changes allowed them to post a 1,877-pound milk increase for the DHIA record year.

A 76-pound increase in fat and 80 increase in protein also worked hand in hand to help them realize profit from listening to their nutritionist and understanding his advice.

"That's the reason the herd average jumped last year, because we had good forages," said Don Gable, who, with his father Charles, farms about 135 crop acres near Elverson. "That's a large part of the reason. Just better hay. And we forage test all the time."

Valuable information

The farm milks a total of 80 cows from a freestall with a milking pipeline. The farm manages approximately 60 replacement head. Herd average at last report was 17,800 lbs. at 4 percent fat and 3.4 percent protein.

What got them to that point dealt with how much they garnered from their nutritionist, Dr. Walter Kennett of F.M. Brown's Sons, Inc. Valuable information it was, indeed. The forage improvements, combined with good growing conditions, allowed them to improve from 1989 (a wet, dismal year for growing), through last year, one of the best ever.

This summer, the Gables also enjoyed a good growing year. They were a part of the state's southeastern corner that enjoyed rainfall that, for the most part, shielded them from the statewide drought.

"We were very fortunate this year," said Charles Gable. "We had rain. From New Holland west, it started getting dry." Gable said the field was checked recently at 205 bushels of corn. In compari-

son, "if you go to Carlisle, they had five bushels," he said.

Listening to weatherman

As for the forages, Gable said that "listening to the weatherman" and drying the alfalfa hay out as soon as possible helped ensure good quality.

Also, the farm ground is heavy, and when it rains too much, a great deal of the alfalfa hay stands are lost. In 1989, with the wet season, they lost a great deal of the stands.

But improvements in the weather blessed them with a better crop this year.

The secret, according to Charles Gable, is "the nutritionist."

Old school

"You see, I'm of the old school," he said. For the older farmers, much of the information is difficult to understand and apply on the farm because of the lingo. "It's getting so technical, it's beyond me anymore. That's why," he said, motioning to his son, "I send him to school."

"High detergent fiber, and this kind of fiber and that kind of fiber, I don't know what they're talking about. He can just understand it," Charles said.

Don Gable was graduated from Penn State with a degree in dairy science. Charles said that his son, because of the valuable Penn State training, can more fully understand and apply knowledge of forages to the farm operations.

"When I came on after high school," said Charles, "and the changes I made, there was a tremendous increase (in milk). The same thing happened again. The biggest change has been the nutritionist. And breeding is better."

Program changes

"The feeding program always changes around with the different advancements, the different findings," said Don. "You're always striving to get your best production. And with different findings from research, that you can work into your situation. Whatever comes along that we can incorporate in a cost-effective way, we'll try to do."

Don said the farm would be able to enjoy the benefits of a TMR, which at this point they don't have because they aren't equipped for it.

And the Ayrshire breed is difficult, when compared to the higher quantity of milk produced by the Holstein. "If you look at the statistics," he said, "Ayrshires are low man on the totem pole. They're not



Charles Gable helps round up the cows at feeding time. "When I came on after high school," said Charles, "and the changes I made, there was a tremendous increase (in milk). The same thing happened again. The biggest change has been the nutritionist. And breeding is better."

a lot of Ayrshires around. With Ayrshires, we have to search high and low for semen that we can use. It's not nearly as readily available as Holstein (semen)."

Don said that they are working on trying to obtain better milk and to improve the genetics of the herd, not so much to expand the herd.

"We're milking 60, and we want to make those 60 better genetically and feeding-wise," said Don. "We want to feed them as best we can and keep making genetic advances with them, so hopefully they'll be better producers than the cows here before them. We would just like to make the animals we have better."

Shearer In Moorman Training Seminar

QUINCY, Ill. — Alonza W. Shearer of Chambersburg, Pa., participated in a comprehensive, six-day training seminar here at the headquarters of Moorman Manufacturing Company.

Alonza is a sales representative for Moorman's, which serves American livestock producers.

Alonza was selected for the

seminar because of his sales and service excellence.

In the week-long program, Alonza was trained in livestock management and health, product knowledge and application and service and support.

Shearer was one of more than 65 participants from across the United States selected to attend.



Don Gable makes out a feed list while holding son Joshua, seven months.



Hiring a nutritionist and obtaining high quality forages allowed the Gable farm to post a 1,877-pound milk increase in their Ayrshire herd, according to Don Gable, who feeds the cows.



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