

Brothers Bustle At North View Farms

GAY N. BROWNLEE

BERLIN (Somerset Co.) —

When brothers Jim, Dan and John Will are on the job at North View Farms, you can bet there's no grass growin' under their feet. These guys mean business.

Until two years ago when their dad, Calvin Will, retired the four partnered the North View Farms, Incorporated, Holstein operation. Now the brothers run the business while Calvin, like many retirees, lives out an agenda that's just as busy as ever.

And their mother, Mary Elizabeth, a cut from the same cloth, runs errands, answers a constantly ringing telephone and has a big electric organ and prominent piano in her living room — testimonials to her musical ability.

When the brothers were graduated from high school and college they wanted to work together but debated the wisdom of doing so. They would never know unless they tried.

The farm of their paternal grandfather was available. Deciding to farm it, they committed to a trial period of one year.

Located near the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the men named it the Will Brothers' Farm. The year was 1971.

Following the successful trial run, they linked with their dad to expand the business.

Altogether, North View Farms Inc. has 750 sprawling, scenic areas.

Five of the seven farms are adjacent. The other two, including the turnpike farm, are separate. An uncle and cousin oversee the turnpike farm. Two hundred more acres of land are rented. The North View operation was incorporated in 1981.

After 21 years of togetherness, the brothers haven't wearied of each other or their work. Meticulous organization is partially responsible. But their determination is equally important to North View's continuing success.

Jim, the eldest brother, is responsible for all crop decisions

"In twenty-one years we haven't all agreed on everything. No operation is silky smooth," he said.

"When there is conflict, we work through it. The operation is large enough that everybody does not have to be involved in every decision."

He added, however, that all the major decisions are discussed by everyone. In the end, the majority rules and nobody gripes about it.

John, the youngest of the three, manages the dairy nutritional responsibilities, while middle brother, Dan is the keenly-informed marketing expert who utilizes both the foreign and local markets for merchandising service-age registered bulls from the registered North View herd.

A 3-inch pipeline running by the 86 cow stalls transports the fresh milk during the three-times-daily milkings. It's then sold to the Maryland-Virginia Cooperative, Reston, Va.

The motto of the Co-op is "Capital milk for the Capitol," since it has many sale outlets in the Washington, D.C. area.

The brothers have designed a flexible rotating schedule for sharing the milking responsibilities. Each man has time off and time away.

John, an avowed cow nutritionist, religiously monitors the feeding of the herd by lisiting to his feed consultant, Sonny Golden from Springville.

"He's referred to as 'the Boss,'" said John. "Haylage is tested every two weeks for variation in protein content," he said.

Samples are sent to the Sky-view Lab at Jennerstown, following which adjustments are made in the total mix ration feeding if necessary.

The only animals going out to pasture at North View Farms are the tailenders and dry cows, John said. He said the foot trimmer comes about four times a year to spend the day trimming the cows' hooves.

"We raise all our own heifers

and purchase now and then too," John said.

North View Farms has five outstanding cows that recently achieved top position on the Pennsylvania DHR leaders list.

"Our goal is to get good heifer calves," said Dan. "But being a realist you get bulls. A lot of commercial guys want service-age bulls," he said.

"The premium market is the export market," said Dan, adding that they were selling to the U.S.S.R. until 1987. He says that market has now dried up.

"Exporting to the U.S.S.R. has slowed with the Russian government in the process of reorganization. The interim process is painful," he said.

Jim makes the crop decisions

deciding on rotation, fertilizer, planting and harvesting. He allots 85 acres for oats, 340 for high-moisture shell corn and 25 for silage corn. Some 325 acres are reserved for hay depending on the season, he said. Normally they get three and a half cuttings of hay for some 10,000 bales and the remain-

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Calvin Will on the right and son John stand in front of a milk tanker at the North View Farms Inc. Calvin is retired, but his three sons have worked to keep and expand the family business. The reflection of the some of the farms is on the tanker.



Dan Will checks on some of the calves raised in hutches at North View Farms Inc.



Jim Will works on an auger, while son Joshua watches on.



North View Farms is an incorporated family business and markets milk through the Maryland-Virginia Cooperative.