

## Hershey Bros. Expand Partnership, Operation

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**PENRYN** (Lancaster Co.) — Two years ago, Dale and Steve Hershey, partners on a small family dairy farm near Penryn, were using a computer to help increase their bottom line by keeping better track of farm records.

The brothers milked about 50 cows, three times-per-day, in an old stanchion bank barn. They also did other jobs off the farm.

Now, using technologies that dairy academicians are currently presenting at dairy seminars as the latest improvements to a modern family dairy farm, the Hershey brothers have given a face-lift and expansion to their family farm.

Nestled in the south foothills of the red sandstone South Mountains, the 135-acre Hershey dairy farm is one of the most recent local dairy operations to expand.

However, this expansion is different.

It may look like the typical, newly built, 88-foot by 100-foot, 150-capacity freestall barn with an alley scaper, manure pit, two pre-cast double-wide bunker silos outside, and a double-eight milking parlor, but it isn't.

It's been fine-tuned in a way that maximizes cow comfort and human efficiency in the same design.

In finalizing the plans, the brothers incorporated a number of university dairy science recommendations for creating a successful modern dairy operation.

The Hershey brothers are Steve, Dale and, within the past year, Clair. Clair came back to the farm after it was decided that an expansion fit into the plans of all the brothers.

The brothers' facility and operation was opened to the public on Tuesday and about 600 people attended the midday event. While most people were from the area, some traveled from New Jersey, Maryland and from Pennsylvania's



From the left, the Hershey brothers' farm layout is expanded from the old barn and silos, to the new horizontal bunker silos, 150 freestall building and the manure storage tank in front of the building.

a's northern tier counties to visit and examine the new facility.

According to Steve Hershey, the public got to see the result of some difficult decisions made by the brothers.

The Hersheys' decisions, they said, were based on years of personal research, attending university extension-sponsored and agribusiness-sponsored seminars, and reading.

Other factors also played a role in the decision to expand: the price of milk, the condition of the family barn, the poor potential for its expansion; the need to add more cows per man to stay competitive; the current economic condition; the three families to support; and the farm having enough acres, with rented cropland, to take on a 150-cow milking string.

"It was a combination of things . . . a whole bunch of stuff at the same time," Steve said, about the



One of the five maternity pens within the Hershey brothers' 150 freestall building shows the sawdust bedded back stall area. Not seen in the foreground is an aisle with gutter scaper.

timing with the project. "It was also a good time to put things out for bids."

Some of the decisions the Hersheys made about how the operation would function were continuations of past practices. Other functional decisions were based on recommendations and going on tours and seeing specific technologies work in practice.

The most major decision they made, of course, was to stay in the milk-making business.

From there, the decision to expand was almost a given.

With the old 50-tie stall barn, Dale and Steve had just gotten the size of the all-registered Holstein milking string up to almost a 70-cow average.

Common wisdom holds that it takes about 50 milking cows to support one immediate family. The herd needed to expand to a level large enough to support all three families.

The location of the expansion, across the road from the farm house and barn, fit perfectly for the freestall operation, because of access to roadways, the contour of the land to provide a ridge for using natural thermal air flow for barn ventilation, the room to build and to locate structures according to total operational design rather than siting because of limitations, etc.

The new facility is also close enough to utilities and the family houses to make working the farm not a major chore.

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The plastic curtains on the open walls of the 150 freestall building roll to the middle from the top half and from the bottom up. This allows better control of ventilation to the cow while she is lying on her bed, since the cow's head is closer to the bottom of the wall.



Looking up from the floor of the new Hershey brothers' freestall building, the unique roof structure is apparent. Sunlight comes through the open roof peak, casting light on rafter beams. Interior, suspended rainspouting is the flat, four-tracked sheet going from the top right of the picture to the bottom middle.