



Promotion of their dairy store is a full-time activity for the Kolb dairy family. Back from left, Leroy; Alice and Roy; Nancy and Roland and son Ryan; and Carol and husband Ken Landis. Photo by Andy Andrews.



Roland Kolb manages the dairy, and here feeds a TMR.

## There's Something Special About March Milk Sales At Kolb's Dairy

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SPRING CITY (Chester Co.)—  
Perhaps snowy weather had something to do with it.

The Blizzard of '93 in March may have put a slight dent in a long tradition at Kolb's Dairy Store and Farm Market.

Because for some reason that Roy Kolb can't pin down, milk sales at his dairy store *always* reach a peak in March. But bad weather slowed sales a little for that traditionally milk-prosperous month.

But what is so special about March?

"I don't know what it is," he said. "I'm not quite sure."

Roy speculates it may be the holidays — which are swamped with soda and other drinks that hurt the sales of milk — in the months preceding. Perhaps it's because people are too busy catching up on bills from the Christmas season, and then again, improving weather allows more people to make it to

the store from outlying areas in March.

But whatever it is, sales peak, and "it's consistent every year," he said.

This past March, the 18-year-old store processed 13,000 gallons of milk (at \$1.85 per gallon) for the store (which also features an array of other grocery items).

### Promote dairy

Promotion of their dairy is a full-time activity for the Kolb dairy family, which consists of Roy and his wife Alice and their children LeRoy, 38; Carol Ann, 37 and husband Ken Landis, 40; and Roland, 32. Also, Roy said two grandsons help milk at the dairy — Kevin, 15, son of Carol and Ken and Seth, 14, son of Leroy and Sally.

Together, they farm about 400 tillable acres (they own 150 and rent 250) and milk about 110 grade Holstein cows. Milking is twice daily at about 5 a.m. and 5 p.m. from a double six parlor. Feeding a

total mixed rations formulated by Agway, the dairy's herd averages are 20,500 pounds, 779f, and 631p.

Roy said that he started the on-farm dairy store, which processes 75 percent of the milk obtained from the herd (the remainder goes to the Atlantic Dairy Cooperative), in 1975 "as an attempt to involve as much of the family as we could," he said.

"It was one way to make a little

extra money to pay the high taxes," he said, with a laugh. "I think that's probably in a nutshell what was really mainly on our mind."

Now, however, there are few on-farm dairy stores still in business, compared to years ago, said Kolb. "There's only about a third of them left anymore," he said.

### Taxes up

In the past two decades, taxes in

the area have gone up 10 times. More residents have moved into the area from outlying urban areas, primarily Philadelphia and surrounding counties. Tax rates went sky high.

"You think it ought to be profitable enough that you can make enough money to pay the mortgage," he said. Recently, Kolb sold the dairy store to his children.

"We did it now, because right now real estate values are about as low as they're going to get around here until they start up again."

Getting the dairy started was a big challenge, according to Kolb, because of the times. In the mid-1970s, gas prices, because of the OPEC embargo, soared to \$1.30-\$1.40 a gallon, which "really hurt people driving out." And in 1982-1983, interest rates skyrocketed to 18 percent and more.

To top off the problems, the dairy couldn't orchestrate the volume of milk necessary to spur sales of products at the store. Eventually they were able to meet their production goals, and go from processing every day to about three times a week. Only in the last five years or so has the dairy been able to sell surplus milk to the cooperative.

### Farmed with father

Kolb married Alice in 1952, and one year later farmed with his father, Paul, through a shares arrangement, with about 22 cows. He rented the farm in 1960 and "went on my own," he wrote in an application for Master Farmer last year. He purchased the dairy in 1965 (41 acres), and picked up additional acreage in 1970.

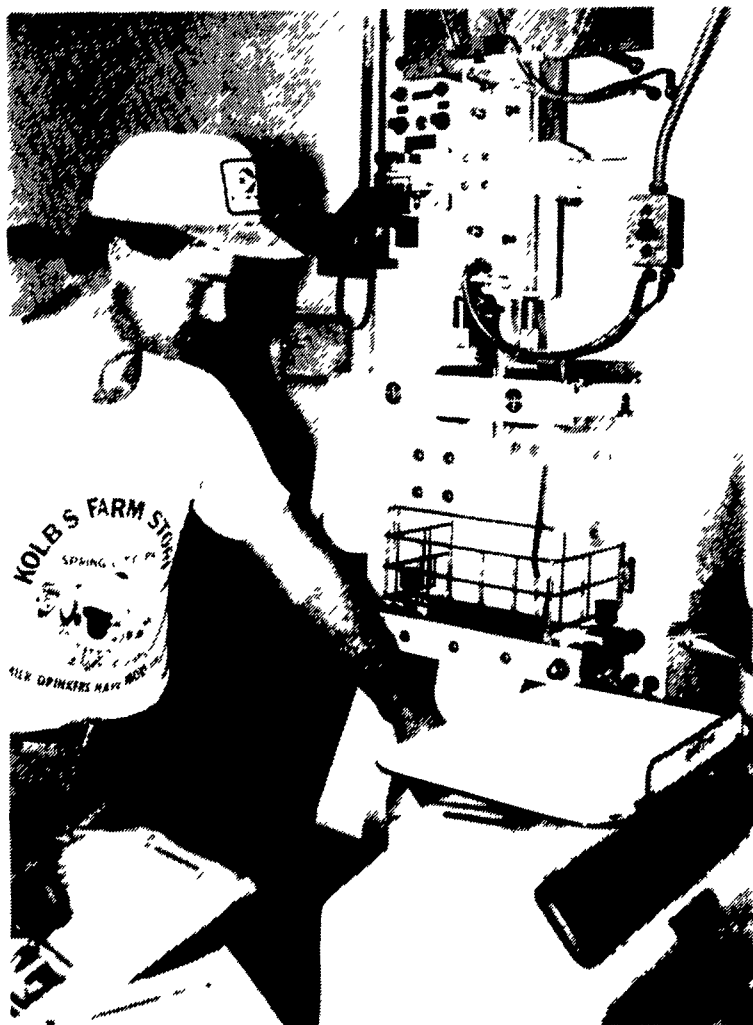
Although the store wasn't started until 1975, the partnership with his children began in 1980 and Kolb purchased another 52 acres of farmland. In 1983, more farmland (24 acres) were purchased, and, years later, Kolb added more children, including son-in-law Ken Landis, to the partnership.

Roy said he helps with the general work around the farm. Carol Ann manages the store and does the bookkeeping. LeRoy manages the dairy, and Roland takes care of the crops and other bookkeeping chores. Ken manages the milk processing plant at the dairy.

The farm's acreage includes about 150 acres of corn, 65 of alfalfa.



The family dairy store features an array of other grocery items. Here, Pam Mack, left, helps a customer.



Ken Landis manages the milk processing plant at the dairy.



Alice Kolb helps seal the gallon milk bags. The on-farm dairy store processes 75 percent of the milk obtained from the herd (the remainder goes to the Atlantic Dairy Cooperative).