

Andrus Family Faces Arduous Decision, Stays Farming

CAROLYN N. MOYER
Bradford Co. Correspondent
TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — For Russell and Carol Andrus and family, 1992 was a year that will be etched in their memories forever.

On May 17, one of their stave silos filled with ryclage and haylage blew up.

"We put the ryclage in and then put haylage on top," said Andrus. "That sealed in the gas. The last load was blown in about one-half hour before it blew up."

Two and a half months later, fate struck another blow when their tie-stall barn burned to the ground. Luckily, no one was injured in either incident and the family was able to save their herd of cows.

After the fire, the family moved

the cows to an uncle's stantion barn where they milked 30 cows at a time until April 17, 1993.

"All winter it took 16 hours a day just to do the chores. My uncle Jake Walborn, hauled hay in and cleaned the barn, or we'd never get done," said Andrus.

Cousins Jim and Joe Andrus also helped get the chores done.

For some people, the loss of two major structures would have convinced them to leave the farming business behind. However, even the double disaster could not deter the spirit of this farm family. With encouragement of the Andrus' two sons, Dave and Brent, they decided to rebuild bigger than before.

Since April of 1993, the family has been milking their seven Ayrshires and 233 Holsteins in a new double-12 herringbone parlor that

can be converted to a rapid exit parlor in the future.

"We built what we thought we could afford to pay for," said Andrus.

The cows are kept in a 300- by 105-foot loose housing facility. Curtains lines the west side of the loose housing, while the east side is open. And adjacent 300- by 50-foot area is used as a feed-lot.

"We had a tie-stall barn with 160 stalls," said Andrus. "Now we are milking 240 and have 404 total head. It takes about two hours and 15 minutes to milk. The cows are comfortable. The only thing I have against the new barn is that we have dirty cows. Other than that, everything's great."

Even before the fire forced a decision, the Andrus family had discussed building a new facility.

CAROLYN MOYER
Bradford Co. Correspondent

As one of the newest correspondents for *Lancaster Farming*, I feel privileged to be among such well-known journalists.

Although I am officially the Bradford County correspondent, I was actually raised on Normandell Jersey Farm in the southeast corner of Tioga County, in Liberty Township.

Now my home is Ty-Ly-View Farm, also located in Tioga County, where my husband Paul farms with his parents. Currently I am home with our two children, 20-month-old Charlie, and 7-week-old Gregory.

Five years ago, if you would have asked me if I wanted to stay home with children, my answer would have been a quick "No."

As a Penn State student majoring in Agricultural Sciences, my career goals were clear. I wanted to be a journalist.

And, immediately after receiving my bachelor's degree, I accepted the position of editor of a farm newspaper in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Now, three years later, my priorities have shifted. I relinquished my full-time post in order to spend more time with my children.

I hope by writing for *Lancaster Farming*, I can bring all readers a glimpse of life in northeastern Pennsylvania, while spending time with my children.

Story ideas can be directed to me through the *Lancaster Farming* office.



Russell Andrus stands among the family's cows in their loose housing facility.



This 300-foot by 105-foot, loose housing facility and adjacent 90-foot by 60-foot parlor/hospital area was completed in April of 1993, one year after the family lost their barn to fire.

"When the barn burnt, I said to my sons, it's time to make up their minds and they both said they wanted to build the barn back. This (barn) is what we were talking about."

Now that the cows are adjusted to the new facility, they are averaging about 60 pounds of milk on two-time per day milking.

"They're milking better now. A lot are milking 90- to 100-pounds per day. They're mostly young cows. We don't have too many old cows left. Close to 100 are first-calf heifers," Andrus said.

Their breeding program focuses on type and production. They work with Sire Power and keep a herd bull on their farm.

The cows are fed a mix of home-grown silage, hay and grain five time per day.

The family owns 600 acres in the hills of the county and rent another 500 acres nearby. The crops are grown on 950 tillable acres surrounding the new barn. Andrus noted that they grow about 250 acres of corn and 80 acres of oats. Hay is grown and round-baled on the remainder of the tillable acres.

"We're all set up for round bales now," Andrus said. "They roll right down in the bunks. We haven't baled a square bale in three years."

Tasks on the dairy are divided equally between the four individuals. Each has his or her own task in the milking parlor, but when it is time to plant corn, Andrus said, "I plant corn and they do the milking."

For Russell Andrus, the philosophy of making farming work is simple: "You've got to get bigger or get out. Of course, maybe I like to spend too much money. I like those big tractors and such."

The commitment to dairying that the Andrus family has shown will ensure that the family farm will be in operation for many years to come, carrying on a tradition of farming started by Russell's grandfather.

"My grandfather owned the farm and then an uncle owned it and then a guy from Philadelphia owned it. My dad bought the property in 1963. (My father) died in 1984 and my mother died in 1985," Andrus said. "It's hills and rocks, but it's home."

DRPC @ Raleigh Advisory Board Meets

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Dairy Record Processing Center @ Raleigh, in Raleigh N.C., held its annual Advisory Board spring meeting recently and adopted a strategic plan for 1994, in addition to other action.

The 16-member advisory board is comprised of eight DHI members and eight DHI personnel (managers or extension staff) who are appointed on a rotating basis, and represent each service affiliate to provide counsel to the DRPC @ Raleigh staff.

The organization has used an advisory board since forming in 1957.

According to a package of news releases, the mission statement in the adopted strategic plan is:

• "To assemble, compute and maintain a high quality database of

accurate information for dissemination to users in a timely manner.

- "To provide high quality PC software products and support for use by service affiliates at the farm, local, and service affiliate levels.

- "To provide training and promotional materials and support for assisting service affiliate personnel in sales and service to current and potential users.

- "To provide official records that meet or exceed National DHIA quality certification standards.

- "To provide cost effective programs and services while sustaining a strong financial position for maintaining quality services and support and for new initiatives."

The goals and priorities

included in the strategic plan is to:

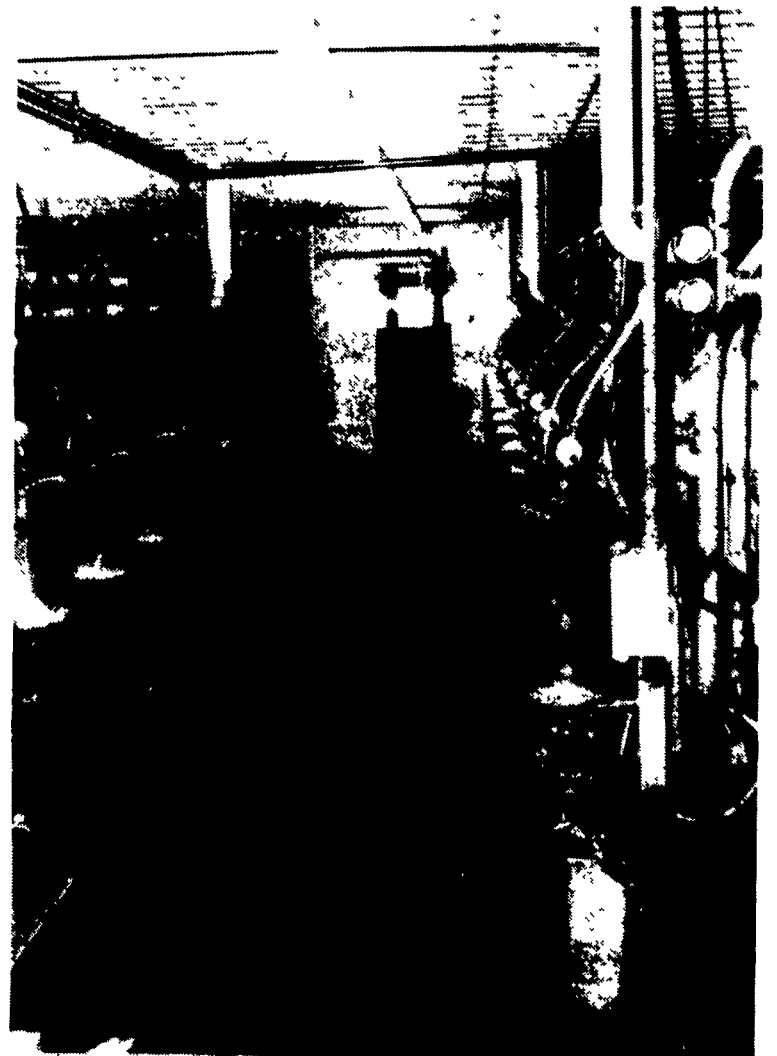
- "Continue to place major emphasis on supporting current service affiliates while promoting use of DRPC products and services by other service affiliates.

- "Encourage distributive processing by expanding on-line databases and by developing PC products for use at the farm, local, and service affiliate levels.

- "Continue to develop the 'focus group' concept as a means of broad based input for enhancing current programs and for developing new programs.

- "Enhance integration of information among processing systems (TPE, PCDART and DRPC host computer) and other DRPC's and on-farm systems to simplify the maintenance and exchange of

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From left, Carol Andrus, Brent Andrus and Dave Andrus work together to milk the family's 240 cows.