

At-Home Schooling Helps Chester Dairy Farmers Thrive

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more to replace it, according to Jesse.

Urban pressure

But tornadoes are the least of the worries for farmers living in a county that is constantly feeling the pressure brought on by urban development. Houses are taking the place of what was once lush farmland. Where once the county had hundreds of dairies, now there is only a handful.

Taxes keep rising. The property value for development keeps increasing. More farmers are quitting the dairy business to go into what many refer to as "house-farming."

But the Lairs see a recent change in the community that may hold some hope for farming.

More and more Amish farmers are starting to farm the Chester County acreage. According to Martha, younger, plain farmers are beginning to see the possibilities of caring for the good agriculture land in the county.

Image changing

The image of farming is changing as the population changes. The farm families have to deal with more urban people (who know little if anything about farming) as they move in.

"A lot of people think that farmers are nothing but ignorant hicks," said Martha. "They're not."

"It's getting harder and harder to have a dairy farm," said Jesse. Equipment is expensive, and expenses keep increasing.

Jesse has employed many modern methods on the farm to help educate the public that farmers are responsible for the land and can make a positive contribution to the community.

Conservation practices

Through the Chesapeake Bay program, in 1992 Jesse installed a 12-foot deep by 60-foot wide concrete manure storage structure.

Through the years, Jesse has installed a wide range of conservation practices that have helped benefit the land and increase its overall productivity.



According to district records, since signing up with the program, the Lairs have installed 2,712 feet of diversions, 3,150 feet of storage terrace, 1,320 feet of underground outlet, 900 feet of grassed waterway, and 96 acres of contour farming. Jesse, left, and David Lair inspect a chisel plow.

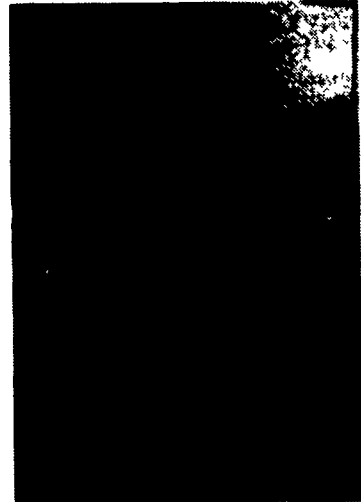
According to district records, since signing up with the program, the Lairs have installed 2,712 feet of diversions, 3,150 feet of storage terrace, 1,320 feet of underground outlet, 900 feet of grassed waterway, and 96 acres of contour farming. Also, the Lairs installed a stream crossing for dairy cows. They follow a nutrient management plan and make use of cover crops.

Some grassland was placed

back into strips a few years ago, according to Jesse. In addition, more diversions were installed according to plan.

In 1988, he installed waterways with underground pipe (using restrictors to ensure controlled drainage).

Jesse said that he is honored by receiving the award, although he said that many other farmers deserve it as much as he does, considering all the hard work they have done to promote conservation.



Jesse has installed a computer feeder system on the farm, which also uses a mixer for some grain, haylage, and corn silage.

National Certifies Mid-East DHIC Labs

HAGERSTOWN, Md. — National Dairy Herd Improvement Association recently

certified the field and laboratory operations of Mid-East DHIC for the next 12 months, according to a recent news release.

According to the release, "All standards for the field services were met as they are required for this year. The lab scored 98 points out of 100.

Mid-East DHIC serves members in Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and in Lancaster and Crawford counties in Pennsylvania, with some other herds in Franklin County.

More than 60 supervisors/technicians are employed to serve the membership.

The Mid-East DHIA Lab, located in Hagerstown, Md., currently analyses more than 110,000 milk samples per month for fat and protein content, and for somatic cells.

The milk samples average 1/2-day in the laboratory until the results are transmitted to the dairy record processing centers (DRPC's).

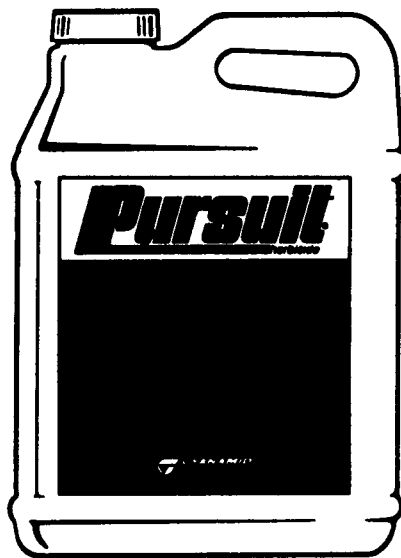
According to General Manager George Gramling, "This is about as fast as we can operate while maintaining the strict standards for quality mandated by National DHIA."

Steve Bank, laboratory manager, oversees six lab employees, while Kelly Fisher, office manager, heads up data entry, assisted by two employees, one working part time.

Bob Hope Jr., is director of field services and works with the DHI supervisors.

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