

# Dairy Lea Opens New Southern Division Office

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — As part of an effort to better serve Dairy Lea's growing milk marketing and insurance businesses in Pennsylvania, the cooperative has opened a Southern Division office in Towanda, Pa.

The office, located at the juncture of Routes 6 and 220, now serves as the center of operations for the new Southern Division. Created at the beginning of the year, the Southern Division includes the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Southern New York membership areas.

Dairy Lea's new and expanded milk sales in the Pennsylvania region have warranted a major increase in the cooperative's presence in that area.

"Pennsylvania is a highly important milk producing and processing region — vital to the Northeast dairy industry," said Rick Smith, chief executive officer for the cooperative.

"In a little more than a year, Dairy Lea has increased its milk sales in Pennsylvania by an astonishing 120 percent! As a result, we are focusing on the opportunities to expand our membership in the region, as well as enhance services

to our members and customers." Additionally, the Towanda office provides logistical and other support, as needed, for insurance and financial operations, and other corporate dealings.

In particular, the Southern Division operation is assisting Agri-Service Agencies — Dairy Lea Cooperative's wholly owned insurance subsidiary — in promoting the new Agri-Service Farm Safety Group in Pennsylvania, which allows farmers to purchase worker's compensation insurance at substantial savings.

Thad Woodward, Dairy Lea's general manager of the Southern Division, is based at the Towanda office and will oversee its operation. Donna Kerrick, a recent addition to the Dairy Lea team, will staff the office.

Initially, business hours for the Towanda office will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office telephone number is (717) 265-4521.

Dairy Lea, a Syracuse-based dairy cooperative with approximately 2,300 member farms throughout the Northeast, markets approximately 3.1 billion pounds



The new office of Dairy Lea was opened to serve growing milk marketing efforts in Pennsylvania.

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marketing network stretching from Maine to Maryland to Ohio.

For information on membership in Dairy Lea, call 1-800-654-8838.

## Premiums Paid For Quality

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Paying additional premiums for the production of high quality milk has become somewhat of a norm in the dairy industry.

At Dairy Lea Cooperative, milk quality is a top priority — yet the approach it takes is a little different. Not only does Dairy Lea offer its members a lucrative premium program for quality milk, it goes one step further by bringing well-trained resource people to its members' farms to assist them in pursuit of quality milk production.

In some cases, producing quality milk is like solving a puzzle. All the pieces must fit together in just the right way.

When Erick and Dixie Coolidge, of Wellsboro, decided to concentrate on earning additional income through Dairy Lea's quality premium program, they drew upon the expertise of their Cooperative's quality control personnel.

"Our goal was to enhance our bottom line, but we had to become educated about new ways of doing things. Dairy farmers have to be educated about improved milking practices and quality control measures, and I commend Dairy Lea for working to increase member awareness in this area," Erick said.

Knowing that help was just a phone call away, he contacted Bob Manning, Dairy Lea manager of field quality control, and Anne Czymmek, Dairy Lea area supervisor, for some personal assistance on their Dairy of Distinction farm.

Although the Coolidges had used approved practices and management tools on their 150-cow farm, the quality premium requirements had been just beyond their grasp. They figured that one or two changes needed to be made on their dairy operation, Le-Ma-Re Farm, to finally earn the quality premium.

They have made seven changes since beginning this endeavor.

"The Coolidges were committed to doing everything necessary to qualify for the quality premium program," said Manning. "They worked hard and smart to achieve their goal."

The first change on the Coolidge farm resulted from a Public Health Rating. Although the farm scored 96, the inspector found a small amount of residue inside the receiver jar. The Coolidges and their employees tried several methods to eliminate the residue, but nothing worked.

Manning, determined to find an answer to this problem, arrived on a Saturday with various chemical solutions. "I appreciate the way Bob handled my situation," Erick said. "He really works with members." Ultimately, the milking equipment company was called in to test the residue in the receiver jar and the Coolidges' water supply to determine what course of action was needed. The company now periodically monitors the water supply for any changes. Eliminating the residue in the receiver jar helped lower the bacteria count.

Second, the pipeline filter mechanism was changed. After pulling the filter over a 24-inch steel spring, a tapered gasket is fitted over the open end. The gasket narrows the diameter of the filter, which slows down the speed, and therefore the force, of the milk flowing through the filter. Rather than forcing small particles through the filter, the slower speed allows the filter to remove smaller particles from the milk.

Third, a routine check of the vacuum pump and system showed inadequate vacuum for proper cow milk-out. "We were finding that some quarters didn't milk out properly," Erick said. So, a more powerful vacuum pump was installed on the milking system, which has helped increase milk production through better cow milk-out.

Fourth, responding to Manning's recommendation, they discovered that changing inflations every six weeks aids in complete milk-out and leads to better udder health. Manning pointed out that the rubber of the inflation is designed for a specific number of milkings. Overuse of the inflations causes the rubber to become porous, leading to incomplete milk-out. When this happens, the

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marketing network stretching from Maine to Maryland to Ohio. cows are more likely to develop mastitis. In addition, the harshness and frequency of cleaning acids, sanitizers and hot water break down rubber inflations, which causes the inflations to crack and develop porous areas in which bacteria can grow. Complete cleaning of the inflations becomes impossible because of these porous areas. Plus, the pulsating process and the number of milkings affect the lifetime and durability of inflations.

Fifth, Manning suggested that the Coolidges change their bedding materials, because sawdust bedding, their original choice, wasn't keeping the cows clean. "I really like the appearance of sawdust, and dry sawdust is great,"

said Erick. "But, we were unable to keep the sawdust dry, which caused high somatic cell counts (SCCs). We've switched to hay bedding from round bales, which is more cumbersome to maneuver, but it has been worth the effort." The SCCs decreased after they moved to hay bedding.

Sixth, the Coolidges selected the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association's (DHIA's) SCC results option, in addition to their basic tests for milk weight and butterfat. Pennsylvania DHIA offers a package of recordkeeping options that farmers can receive for a nominal fee. With the SCC option, Pennsylvania DHIA provides monthly records that include: the SCC

range for each animal; the amount of lost income per animal, per day and per month due to SCC levels; and the frequency of high SCCs over the cow's lactation. "These reports indicate the high SCC contributors in the herd, which we have found useful for culling purposes," he said.

Seventh, at the urging of Manning and Czymmek, they switched their milking preparation techniques. Before, they used a bucket of hot water and a towel. Now, they only use individual towels and include pre- and post-dipping.

Erick admits this change was the most difficult. No one, including himself, liked it at first, because it changed a traditional

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