

Next Generation Continues

(Continued from Page A1)

"We bought some 5- and 6-year-olds from Dad that are now 12-, 13- and 14-years-old. I think that's why we have heifers to sell. The cows just stay in the herd."

Will and brother Joe make the breeding selections now. For their heifers, they breed artificially once. Those that don't settle are run with a cleanup bull. The selections are based on durability and longevity.

"I like good quality cows. We breed for feet and legs, a cow that will last," Will said, adding with a laugh that, "Of course we breed for the Excellent cow."

Will said that while good quality cows are important to the success of creating and sustaining a profitably milking herd, and other aspects of good dairying — such as herd health and reproduction — are important, the most important to him is good feed.

"Everything starts with that," he said. "I'm real picky about making good quality forage. I might as well be. You spend a lot of money putting it out, and it's in the field and can be made."

Additionally, he said he thinks there's a difference between the quality of the nutrients provided through well-grown forages and those provided through supplements.

"I always felt you can't get as much milk out of bought proteins and minerals as you can out of good quality forage," he said.

Altogether, they raise 240 acres of corn, 40 acres of small grain, and 180 acres of alfalfa.

On the alfalfa, Will said he makes the first cutting during the bud stage, and after that, every 30 days.

About three-fourths of the haylage goes into two of the farm's four silos, and the rest is baled. Last year, they round-baled a lot of hay, but Will said it wasn't a typical year.



Will Yoder checks the quality of his TMR.

At the time, the herd's diet consisted of 25 pounds of haylage, 22 pounds of corn silage, cottonseed, high moisture corn and a supplement.

He currently feeds 80 pounds per day in the bunk feeder, and because he is not set up to group cows, in February 1989 he installed five computerized feeding stations. In 1991, a silo was taken down to make room for a feed mixer to make a totally mixed ration (TMR).

"I just like the idea of top dressing the higher producers," he said. "I'm glad I put the computer in first, otherwise I wouldn't have (purchased it.)"

"Before, with just the computer, it didn't balance (the ration in) the bunk. The (TMR and computerized feeder) work well together."

While Will emphasized the importance of a strong feeding program, Bets priority is with raising calves. She said she believes that some new "calf condos" that were tried on the farm have been having a good effect.

"I like good healthy calves," Bets said. "Fresh air and sunshine,

you just can't beat it. I haven't had a whole lot of problems since we put in the condo.

"I can get calves on grain quicker and just grow a lot better than being kept in the barn," she said, adding that it has other benefits too.

"It's the easiest way to feed calves. The children help and car play out there," she said.

The condos are three long hutches with seven individual cal pens per hutch. Bets keeps the calves there for three months feeding starter, and weans them to corn silage with soybeans and mineral after four months.

Their first condo was constructed and used in September last year, with the other two added in December.

The extra calf-raising space has also helped the farm attempt to diversify its production. After raising five Holstein steers last year, the Yoders said they plan to raise all their bull calves this year by putting them through the Tend-R-Lean feeding program and selling the lean and consistently high quality meat.

Like most other farms, the Yoders have had to work through ups and downs to find a balance on the farm.

"I believe we've been blessed," Will said. "We enjoy farming. I think it's a good way of life.

"We've been blessed with a good herd of cows, and for the hills we have, we have good soils and crops.

"One goal of mine is to have a 22,000- to 23,000-pound herd average with a few home-bred Excellent cows. Of course we'd all like to see higher milk prices.

"I just want to keep the family interested in farming, not bog them down with work. I want them to enjoy it."

"We try to keep it simple," Bets added. "I like it. I like the idea of raising my children on a farm. I teaches responsibility and caring for animals."

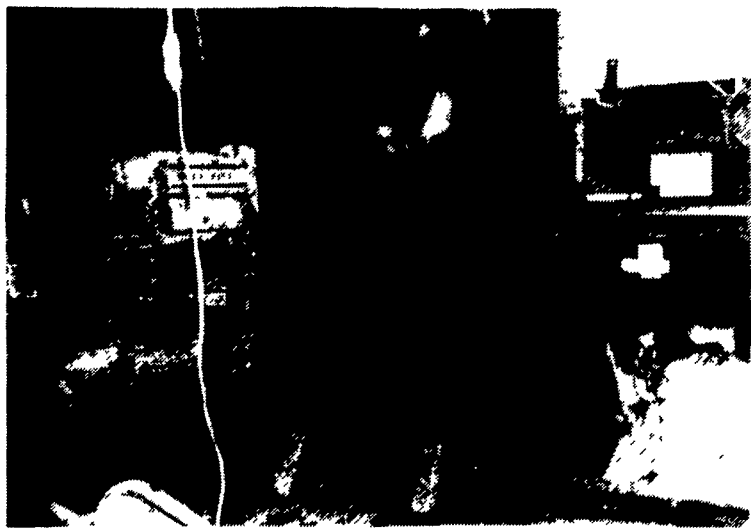
They both said they were very thankful for their entire family.

"We wouldn't be here if it weren't for both families," Bets said, referring to Joe and Lisa, "for the cows and moral support."

Talking in the farmhouse kitchen about the future, Will said, "Who knows what that holds!

"Some question whether the family farm will last or not. I don't see why it won't last."

Then, as if to prove his father's point, Joshua started making a tractor noise while playing on the living room carpet with his farm toys, practicing his plowing.



Will Yoder shows his feed preparation setup consisting of a computerized feeding system combined with a totally mixed ration (TMR) system.

Grazing Gazette

PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences
in cooperation with USDA/ARS



TIMOTHY FRITZ Montgomery Co. Extension Agent

The hectic season of pasture management should now be about over for most graziers. The spring growth explosion is behind us and hopefully excess paddocks were timely harvested for high quality winter forage or for supplemental forage to be fed during times of slow growth. Most pastures should have also been clipped at least once to remove any old growth or pasture weeds. (My definition of a pasture weed is any plant that is not normally grazed. Consequently, dandelions and many other field crop weeds are not pasture weeds.)

Management of pasture should now be shifting from attempt to keep up with growth to slowing down the rotation to avoid overgrazing. Remember, the basics of good management of intensive grazing is to have the cows enter a paddock when it is around 8 inches (6 inches for sheep) in average height. Typical rest times for cool season grasses will vary from around 18 to 40 days depending on temperature and moisture conditions. Of course the drier the conditions, the longer the rest period. A good grazier has a sense for how fast the pasture is growing and when conditions begin to change. This sense of pasture growth is acquired over time by regular walks through the paddocks and experience. Observation from a tractor, pickup or 4 wheeler is not good enough unless you get off of it! You may also have to get on your hands and knees occasionally to really see what's happening in the paddock.

If the current paddocks in use are slowing to a point where 8 inches of growth will not be achieved, you have 3 basic options.

- 1) Add more paddocks to your system if available.
- 2) Increase forage supplement

3) Reduce the number of animal units.

Depending on your specific situation one or more of the above adjustments should be done before the paddocks start getting light. Grazing paddocks before they are already for harvest is like harvesting corn silage before the corn has tasseled. By slowing down the rotation, pasture yield will be increased dramatically. Remember, grass that is short grows very slowly compared to grass that is 4 inches or so tall and just kicking into gear. Don't harvest your paddocks before they have reached their full potential. On the other hand, don't rest them too long in that pasture quality goes down resulting in lower production. Harvest excess paddocks early before you would normally make hay so that they can be returned into the pasture system as needed if pasture growth slows down even further.

Flexibility and forward thinking is required to achieve good summer pasture yields and quality. Follow the basic rules of 1st group in at 8 inches (sheep 6 inches). Last group out when pasture is 2 to 3 inches and before grazing of regrowth occurs. By following proper rest and good grazing management, your pastures should produce high quality forage all summer long; where as, poorly managed pastures will be struggling to stay green.

Grazing Calendar

- June 24, Pasture Walk, Bedford Co. (814-623-9610)
- June 28, Pasture Walk, Lehigh Co. (814-391-9840)
- July 13, Pasture Walk, Bedford Co. (814-623-9616)
- March 6 and 7, 1996—2nd Annual PA Grazing Conference, Grazing Research and Education Center, 116 Agricultural Sciences and Industries Building, University Park, PA 16802

'CommuniTree' Workshop Set

CHAMBERSBURG (Franklin Co.)—A "CommuniTree" Workshop will take place on Thursday, July 13, at the Penn State Mont Alto Campus from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The purpose of the program is to provide information to municipalities, homeowners, and tree care professionals on urban tree selection, planting, and maintenance. The daylong program will

include demonstrations and workshops on planting, pruning, and care of trees. In addition, there will be sessions on landscape architecture, identifying tree hazards, and working with poor soils.

For more information or to register, contact Penn State Cooperative Extension, (717)263-9226.



Betsy Yoder feeds calves housed in some of the farm's new "calf condos."



Heron Run family dairy farm sits nestled among the hills of Huntingdon County.