

Jones Farm Open To Visitors Aug. 19

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Maryland Correspondent
MASSEY, Md. — Lester C. "Bucky" Jones spent all his life farming New Jersey ground that's been in his family since "the time of the Indians."

So what's he doing at this brand-spanking new dairy in one of Maryland's far northeastern counties?

The pressure of development pushed Jones, his family and their milk cows off that ancestral ground.

But there was no way moving was going to mean getting out of milking, Jones said recently.

He and his sons — David, Sean and Andy — took 12 years planning for their new spread.

Though there've been a few glitches along the way, nearly four months after they started milking at their Kent County quarters, the men said they're satisfied with the move.

They're hosting an open house on Aug. 19 so folks can get a better look at their set-up.

The farm milks three shifts a day under the watchful eye of the Joneses and their employees.

Son Sean, 30, is the herdsman, who takes care of cow records.

Sean's wife of seven years, Tammy, does the bookkeeping and billing. The handful of Jerseys in the herd belong to her — the progeny of a birthday gift from Sean.

The couple met when they were attending Virginia Tech. They have two children — Ethan, 3, and Katelyn, who was born shortly after the Joneses settled on the property last July.

Andy, 26, also works with the cows, taking care of feeding and whatever else comes his way.

David, 32, handles machinery maintenance on two mixer wagons, 20 tractors and four tractor trailers.

"Keep me away from those cows and I'm happy," he joked.

David said his job security is guaranteed because "they break 'em faster than I can fix 'em."

He and his wife, Connie, have two children — Christine, 8, and Matthew, 6.

Jones and his wife Diane have been married 33 years. They also have three daughters — Cathy, 24, Jennie, 20 and Bonnie, 18. The women pursue their own interests and education off the farm.

Jones said he sees his farm as a large family operation — 50 to 80

head supporting each of the four families.

Development closing in on the farm in New Jersey was making that task more and more difficult, he said.

In Kent County, "People make you feel like they want you here," said daughter-in-law Tammy. "This offers our children more of a future."

The Joneses could've had their new farm up and running six years ago on acreage about eight miles north of where they finally settled.

But that deal didn't work out.

So the family went back to the drawing board.

Financing the deal was the biggest challenge. Bucky Jones said.

He sold some land for a county airport and some for a housing development, he said. Another portion was permanently preserved under a transfer of development rights program. And he has retained about 800 acres that he is currently growing crops on.

Complicating matters was a depressed housing market which devalued the land, Jones said.

In the end, all the headaches

were worth it, he said.

"We kept the family together and in a decent milk market," Jones said.

The farm is 1½ hours from their old spread, making it easy for the family to get home and visit Jones' mother.

At present, however, Jones and his sons are devoting a lot of time to getting their cows acclimated to their new home.

The stress of the move had seriously knocked production, Sean

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Cows file into the parlor. All cows wear automatic identification and heat detection sensors.

Here's How The Dairy Is Equipped

JOANNE E. MORVEY
Maryland Correspondent
MASSEY, Md. — The Jones' dairy set-up is the result of years of research and planning.

Bucky Jones and his sons have been studying ideas from dairy farms across the country for more than a decade. Nearly four years ago, they began working with Triple H Construction of Ephrata, Pa. to design the dairy complex.

The Joneses farm is just a few miles from the crossroads that mark the center of the tiny town of Massey.

The Jones have 1,200 acres there — 950 tillable. The dairy complex is on about 35 acres.

The family is milking 560 head — Holsteins and a handful of Jerseys — in a double 12 parallel parlor. Cow capacity is 600 head and the parlor expands to a double 20, Bucky Jones said.

The parlor is mechanized under the Boumatic Xpressway integrated management system. Bucky

Jones is a longtime Boumatic dealer with customers in five states.

"I got into that years ago because I wasn't happy with the milk equipment we had," he said.

At the Jones' state-of-the-art set-up, milk is funneled from the parlor to one of two 6,000 gallon tanks. One milk tank is filled each day. The Joneses have their own tanker truck to get the milk to Atlantic Dairy Cooperative. Bucky's father, the late Lester C. Jones Sr., was a longtime president of the coop.

There are basement storage rooms below the parlor. One side houses the air compressor and receivers. The other side holds the water system and vacuum pumps.

Jones uses a gravity flow water system — one tank with 4,000-gallon storage capacity and just one float valve — to control all the water on the property.

Jones installed the wash system

himself. It's based on a thermosy heat exchange. The gas from the hot milk is harnessed, thermosy begin to heat the water and one water heater does the rest, warming 500 gallons of water to 180 degrees Fahrenheit in mere minutes.

Well water is used to cool the milk. It takes out about ⅓ of the heat, Jones said. A chiller removes the rest of the heat in the milk. The cold water is then recycled as drinking water for the cows.

The Joneses depend on irrigation to keep their crops consistent. Jones said the previous owner of the farm was harvesting 200 bushel-to-the-acre corn "in dry years," thanks to the irrigation.

The farm has four bunker silos, measuring 60 feet across by 200 feet long by 12 feet high. Walls for an additional bunker — 40 feet by 200 feet by 9 feet — are being brought down from New Jersey, he said.

Commodities are stored in bulk in a large shed. At the New Jersey farm, David shared his machine shop with the communities. The new arrangements — and the much larger, separate shop, — make his life much easier, he grinned.

An underground manure management system leads to a 12-acre lagoon, which has enough storage for the waste of 1,200 cows for 180 days. Jones said it took two months before the bottom of the lagoon was covered.

There are a number of homes on the property — most occupied by the milkers and their families. Sean and his family live in the main house at the farm. The rest of the family have moved nearby.

Bucky Jones said the buildings were designed to reduce heat stress. The family didn't expect to test them so soon, however.

The loafing shed for the milk cows — which measures a whop

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Lester C. "Bucky" Jones spent 12 years planning for his family's new dairy farm in Massey, Maryland.



Looking across the farm, from left, the older helper shed; the milking parlor, office, and dairy; one of two mixer wagons, and the loafing shed.