

Behind The Scenes

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 and breeding their daughters."
 "Unfortunately, artificial insemination still isn't feasible cost wise with milking sheep."
 Each milking, twice daily from April through autumn, produces about 20 pounds of milk. Cheese yield is about 25 percent. Sheep milk sells for \$55 to \$75 per hundred pounds and the cheese sells for \$10 a pound.
 The sheep lactate for about 150 days total with milking being done for three months. Lambs stay with their mothers for 40 to 45 days.
 Sheep milking dairies must be inspected and the Thomsens have the only inspected sheep dairy in the state of Pennsylvania.
 It takes only 1 1/2 to 2 minutes to milk each sheep.
 Milk is frozen immediately after each milking and transported

to a small family operation located near Harrisburg, twice during each season.
 "Marketing is the most difficult phase," explains Kate. "We market almost any way we can. At first we gave cheese away and that brought us our best customers."
 The Golden Eagle, an elite bed and breakfast/gourmet restaurant located in Bedford, is a steady customer.
 A natural food store in Pittsburgh also purchases on a regular basis.
 "Our biggest problem is that most stores will only buy from dealers," Kate says. "And, our quantity is a little too small for most dealers."
 "Marketing is now our most important problem although word of mouth helps immensely."
 All of the Thomsen sheep are

pastured with additional hay being fed during the winter months. Lambs are moved to a fresh pasture daily. No chemicals are used on the pasture and no hormones are used on the lambs.
 The only other feed is a tuna fish can full of ground corn and molasses which entices the sheep to enter the milking stanchions.
 Fresh lamb is another product of the Thomsen farm. They are available from September through November and are sold by the half or whole lamb.
 "Milking the sheep was just another way to get them to help

pay the rent," Dale laughs.
 It is Dale's dream to one day have a cheese factory located in the county and a goal to which he is steadily working. "This is a large dairy area," he continues. "And, there are times when snow prohibits milk pickup or the cows get into the garlic, or various other reasons why milk can only go to the cheese factory. If it were located here, the profit could be much more substantial."
 In addition to the sheep the Thomsens also raise chickens, which are kept in portable pens on

pasture and moved daily to fresh grazing. They likewise receive no hormones or medications in their feed.
 Chickens are also sold by word of mouth and mostly to individuals who want to stock up for their freezers.
 Two children Ean and Niva complete the Thomsen family. Niva, born in January of this year, has already undergone several serious heart operations at the Hershey Medical Center but seems to be thriving at this point.
 Visitors to the Thomsen farm are always welcome.

Grassi Family Is Down To Earth

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 Since arriving in Bedford County, the Grassi family has already experienced a summer with little rain and a summer with constant rain.
 "You have to learn to take the good with the bad," Jim admits. "And, this year, I was able to get my sweet corn in especially early and was glad to see it came up despite the dry spring weather."
 The Grassi family was also glad to see Shawnee State Park open

again after being closed for an entire summer due to some reconstruction of the dam. It affected all of the small "Mom and Pop" style businesses in the area.
 In addition to the vegetables, the Grassi family had more than 100 laying hens providing fresh eggs at \$1 per dozen.
 There are 25 Yorkshire hogs and a small herd of feeder calves to which all of the food is raised on the farm. Excess hay is also sold throughout the year.



Checking the progress of the plants in the field. By early June, the tomato plants are large and bearing fruit.

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