

# Jo-San Dairy Farm Is Susquehanna County Dairy Of Distinction

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farm failure was poor management.

But now, being in direct competition with international milk supplies produced with different regulations, cheap labor and land, and long distance hauling, and having the increasingly high overhead and taxes and real estate values, a farmer doesn't need to give any excuses for having a dairy farm failure. It isn't his fault.

"Expenses are sky high, but I can do it (continue to farm), because I lived poor all my life and I know how to do it.

"And that's the worst part. (Dairy farmers) keep hoping all the investment and time, the desire to own the farm... will pay off.

"If I were a true businessman, I wouldn't be farming."

He bemoaned the price of milk he receives compared to the price of a farm truck he is asked to pay.

"Why is it," he asked, "that I get the same price for milk that I did in 1977?"

That was the year that he bought his current uninspectable pickup truck (for regular road use) for which he paid \$3,800 new.

He said the same-use model offered by the same manufacturer is closer to \$38,000 today.

The disparity in value growth is large.

Pavelski even joined a group of dairymen to march on Washington D.C. on July 15 in an attempt to bring some sense of fairness to dairy pricing.

Some farmers perceive widespread deceit and greed on the part of management decisions in retail, marketing and processing; they sense that competitiveness has gotten out of control and decisions are being made for goals other than sustaining the health of an industry.

Some sense that executives are playing with the price of milk that farmers get in order to win marketing chess games and that farmers are dispensable pawns.

Some see government's role in poor dairy prices in several different ways: being in the way just enough to allow retailers and processors enough excuses and legal obstacles to be able to reduce the price of milk to farmers while increasing it to the consumer; not reacting properly because of not understanding or caring about what is going on; or reaction poorly because the two-party political system's tit-for-tat funding-raising system is not held separately enough from day-to-day government action and creates too much influence against fulfilling public policy that serves the most good.

Of course, there are other opinions.

And a lot of this has been working on his mind, especially lately, Pavelski said.

For example, the bottom line is that a pretty farm won't set the pricing of milk right, nor solve the rest of the problems of the world.

In the most detached sense, a pretty farm is probably wasting money that could be used better for something else, such as crop insurance.

After all, the majority of milk is mostly marketed to processors as a generic product and it gets treated that way.

But, there are reasons for achieving the qualities that are required of a Pennsylvania Dairy of Distinction.

An aesthetically pleasing farm is a more pleasant farm on which to work.

There is also something to family farms, as with many family businesses, that lend themselves more to beautification efforts — milk is not the major product of a family farm, people are the product; people who know that some things can't be measured by money, and can be valued all the more.

When their barn burned, Pavelski said the value of a supportive and helpful community was demonstrated.

"You can't believe how many friends you can have," he said talking about how the cows and heifers ended up going in all different directions to different farms, and feed was supplied in generous amounts. "You just can't comprehend how many good neighbors and friends you have."

His children are his pride. "All the kids really like farming," he said.

Their daughter Cathy Pavelski was the first girl from Pennsylvania to win a national dairy judging title. She is currently in California working for Alta Genetics, having graduated with a degree in dairy science from Penn State University. She was the national first place 4-H winner in Wisconsin, and she also was a first place collegiate dairy judging winner at Louisville, Kentucky.

The year she went to Madison, she and Michelle, their other daughter, who is currently studying to be a doctor, were the state's first sisters on the team.

The sisters are competitive, he said. "Michelle was first in Pennsylvania, and then Cathy beat her at nationals."

Joseph and Sandy have two boys — Steven who is currently in his second year at Penn State pursuing a dairy science degree; and Matthew, 10th grade high school student son, Matt, who is on the county dairy judging team.

The boys enjoy dairy cattle and judging as well. Steve had placed first at Delaware Valley College competitions when he was in 4-H.

Joseph said he has an office full of his children's trophies.

"The kids began showing cows in '85; the first year they went to states, and went to states every year except last year. We had some good cows, but Cathy, Michelle, and Steve on 4-H team, they had a really good time in Louisville.

"Last year we missed the first All-American in a while. But for last three years have the Susque-

hanna County Fair premier breeder and exhibitor award, and we showed the grand champion last year, and had the best bred and owned."

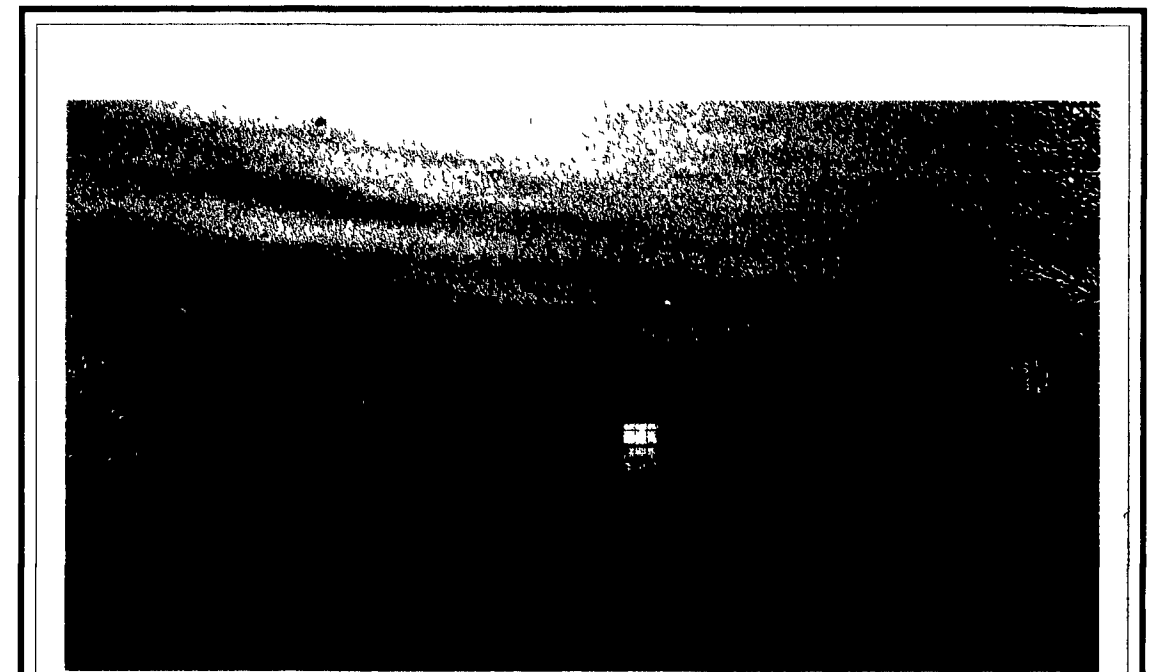
The family was also the first recipient of the county fair's Miller Page Memorial Award, which is granted to the best bred and owned Holstein.

"I want them all to get an education," Joseph said. "All of them like sports, all have done well academically. They have done well in high school and better in college. They know it's a lot of money (to go to college).

"But, after they all go, they can farm if they want to, but they'll have something to back them up."



Jo-San Dairy in Gibson, Susquehanna County, is a successful family farm with a registered Holstein herd. The tie-stall barn was built after a 1992 fire destroyed the old barn.



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