



Chris and Rob Waddell take pride in their Apple Shamrock Farm and its Dairy of Distinction status.



Family and home are important to Rob and Chris Waddell and they take pride in their dairy farm home.

### Waddells Build For The Future

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TOWNVILLE (Crawford Co.) — A strong desire to succeed in the dairy industry by growing and increasing efficiency prompted Crawford County dairy farmers Robert J. and Christine Waddell, Townville, to build a new free stall barn and expand their herd.

Waddells are currently milking 280 head of primarily grade Holsteins and are slowly growing to 400. Much of their growth will be internal, but they are buying between 80 and 100 heifers from a neighboring farmer.

They decided to expand because they are outgrowing their current facility.

"We feel it's the direction the industry is taking," said Chris. "Rob is very progressive and likes the challenge." Rob added, "It will help us become more efficient."

Currently, they are in the process of building a new, 206-stall, free stall barn, but they plan to expand it to 400 stalls. They also plan to build a new parlor in two to five years.

Planning for the new free stall barn, parlor, and herd expansion has been ongoing for several years.

"We did a lot of budgeting and planning," Chris said. "We spent money to bring a consultant in, and looked at finances again and again."

In addition to spending a lot of time looking at the financial aspects, they toured farms and considered a wide range of designs.

Rob said he followed a rule-of-thumb when considering changing an operation, "Do everything with the worst case scenario, figure lower milk prices and production than you realistically expect."

Before they started construction they constantly worked to improve their rolling herd average, which is currently 23,000 pounds of milk, and their harvesting system, to get forages off faster.

"Your planting and harvesting set up your feed for next year," Rob said, "so it's important to get things in and off at the right times."

Like most farmers, they are continuously working to improve milk production and cropping efficiency.

Waddells have even planned the move into the new facility to help ease the transition and reduce stress on the animals.

"We plan to move first calf heifers and younger cows first," Rob said. "We're going to try to do everything slowly and right." They hope to begin moving into the new barn by mid-July.

The Waddell family originally came to Apple Shamrock Farms in 1976, when Rob's dad, Bob, bought the 243-acre farm. At that time there were 105 Jerseys and one Holstein on the farm.

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