

## Druck Family to Host York Holstein Picnic

AIRVILLE (York Co.) — A calf-housing greenhouse is the latest housing addition at Airvue Farm, located on the edge of the southern York County village of Airville. The bright, airy dairy herd nursery is one of the two most recent expansions to the David Druck family's operation, which will host the annual York County Holstein summer picnic on Friday, August 14.

Airvue Farm is owned and operated by the David Druck family, which includes David, his wife Chris, and their two sons, Jesse, 18, and Mike, 16. The farm consists of a milking herd of 85 registered and grade Holsteins, plus young stock, and 600 acres of owned and rented cropland.

In 1968, David went to work for his uncle, Robert, former owner of the Airville farm. David and his uncle formed a partnership in 1972, the same year he and Chris were married. Six years later, the couple bought the farm from Robert.

The original milking facility had 24 stalls, expanded over the years to the current 32 stalls. Later improvements included pipeline installation and free stalls "stuck here and there to make do."

"Four years ago, after the really hard winter, we decided we had to do something about expansion. We just had too many cows for our space," David recalls.

That expansion began two years ago, with the construction of a 61x196-foot freestall facility with 97 stalls in three rows. The open-sided, truss-type barn is fitted with split plastic sidewall curtains for quick and variable ventilation in changing weather conditions. Three-foot-wide roof

overhangs shelter the open sides from all but the worst blowing rainstorms.

A 40-foot-wide pen at one end is maintained as a calving area. Three large waterers provide plentiful access for the dairy herd to drink. And the barn's location on a flat, open area provides almost constant free-flowing air movement for ventilation.

Sand was the original — and still preferred — bedding material, but cost is prohibitive.

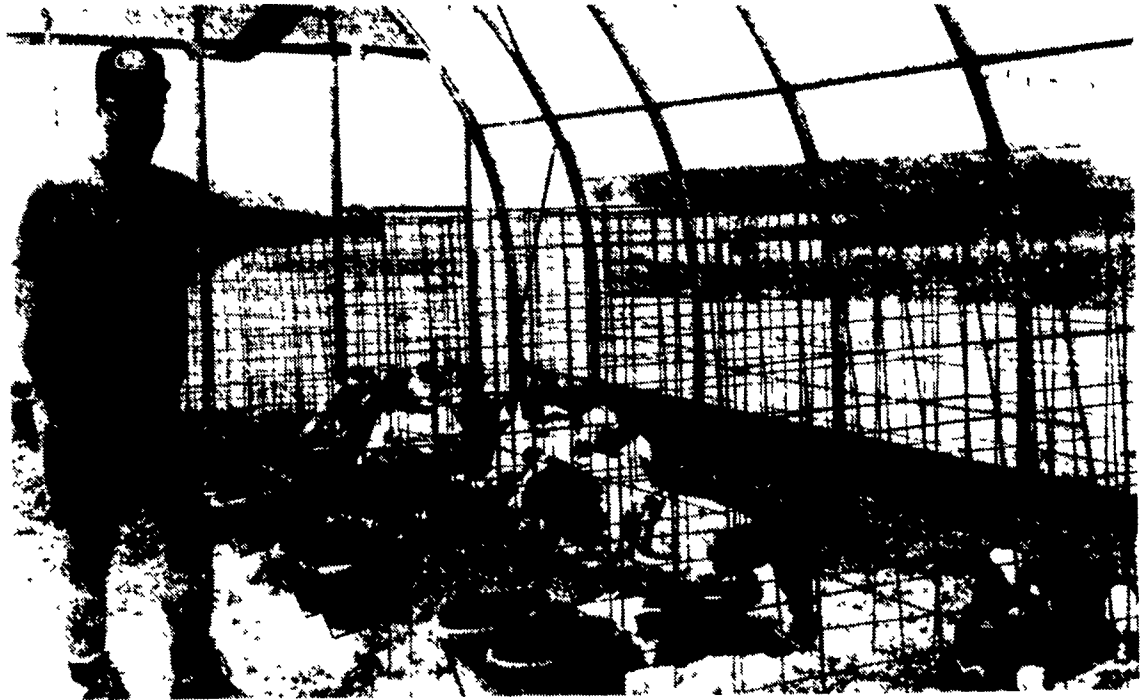
"The cows loved it; they would just lay on the sand and not want to go anywhere else," recall the Druck family. But they discovered that the sand deposits which clung to the teats were hard on equipment and the cows' muzzle whiskers dragged enough sand into the waterers to create constant deposits which had to be removed.

Chopped straw is their alternate bedding choice. David runs the bedding straw through the forage harvester, storing it in bulk in a barn and bedding weekly by driving through with a wagon.

Cows are moved from the freestall barn to the head-lock rows in the original barr for milking, which is handled with six automatic take-off units. As cows on one side of the barn are being milked, the next group is being rotated into the opposite side, providing nearly continuous and efficient movement of cows.

"Our herd average production jumped between 3,000 and 4,000 pounds of milk when we moved the herd into the new housing facility," relates a pleased Chris. Today, the herd average is at 21,800 milk.

Construction of the freestall facility was planned from the



Dave Druck and his family are hosts for the York Holstein Association's annual summer picnic. Their Airville dairy operation features two new housing facilities, including this greenhouse calf nursery.

beginning for future possible expansion. Both Jesse and Mike are interesting in farming, so David and Chris anticipate adding a milk parlor and expanding the herd numbers.

There are no real changes the Drucks would make to their well-planned barn after two years of use, but there have been a couple of interesting surprises. One is the method in which their herd utilizes the three large drinking waterers, one located at each end, and a third in the center, with a through-walkway for easy accessibility to the cows in all rows.

"The center waterer is the one the cows use the most," explains David. "They will come from milking into the barn, walk right by the first waterer at the

end and go to the one in the middle."

Dan McFarland, Penn State facility engineering specialist, has been monitoring the Druck's watering setup since the beginning of the barn's use, so the statistical data backs up the observation with solid numbers. David says the cows drink at least one-third more of their needs from the center waterer than from either of the two end ones.

The monitoring project has also shown that, contrary to the long-held theory that a mature dairy cow drinks some 40 gallons of water each day, the Druck herd averages 25-27 gallons, per day, year round.

They are also extremely pleased with their split-section wall curtaining, which can be rolled up or down within seconds when sudden weather changes, like blowing thunderstorms, rumble in over the Airville hills. The split sectioning also allows greater flexibility for achieving

maximum ventilation for cow comfort.

Just a few yards across a neatly-mown stretch of lawn from the freestall barn is an ever newer addition, the 30x60-foot calf-greenhouse nursery. Nearly spotlessly-clean calves lounge in individual pens made of hog panel wire and bedded with wood shavings. Intended population is for about 21 calves, though they are occasionally doubled up if a calf boom occurs. The plastic is 2-ply, with a layer of insulating air kept pumped between the double plastic sheets.

Shadecloth covers both ends, though during summer weather the cloth is mostly removed for ventilation and air flow. A garage door at one end provides easy access for skid loader cleanout. Pens are limed between calf occupants to further limit bacterial growth.

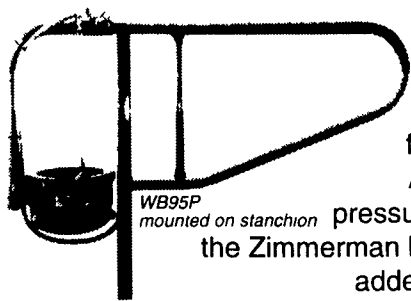
"We've had great results with our calves in this," says Chris,

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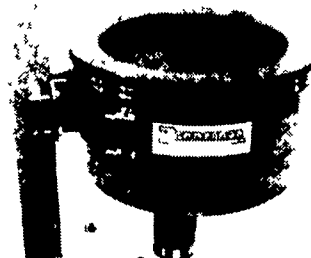
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