

# On Dairy Tour, Teachers Learn Importance Of Foot Health

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— Standing in front of a headlock gate, Jim Kulick held up a rubber cow slip, used to protect the hoofs of somewhat "downtrodden" dairy animals.

Kulick told a few school teachers from the Cumberland County area that cows' feet sometimes pose major health problems on the farm.

"Foot problems would include foot rot and warts, which can be very contagious," he said during the first annual Cumberland County Ag in the Classroom teacher tour, conducted late in April at the John and Julia Stover dairy farm near Carlisle.

Kulick spoke to the teachers

about what dairy farmers learn to do to maintain optimum herd health.

The few that attended questioned the dairy farmers about the use of antibiotics and hormones. They asked him what the steel structure was that stood in back of him, near a gate leading into the freestall barn. The barn is curtain-sided with fans. A mister will be installed this summer, to douse the cows with water, cooling them.

Kulick demonstrated the headlock gate, using belts, to keep the cows in place while they are treated. He told them they are steadied easily that way.

He showed them the footpath that leads around the freestall area, where the cows walk through a puddle of copper sulfate.



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To replace the greenhouse plastic, it cost about \$500, Kulick told the tour group. The total cost of the structure was \$8,500, which includes 1A crushed limestone. The building measures 32 by 100 feet. A new milk room was under construction near the entrance.



Gradually, the Stover Dairy, which includes about 1,100 acres, is moving toward becoming all-registered, which takes time, according to Jim Kulick, center. From left, Mandy Lehman, Cumberland County 4-H extension agent; Becky Davis, third grade teacher from Grace Baptist, Carlisle; Nancy Bauman, third grade teacher from Upper Allen Elementary, Mechanicsburg; Ann Kulick; Jim Kulick; John Stover; Julie Stover; and Sallie Gregory, Cumberland County extension agent. Photo by Andy Andrews



A recently constructed calf greenhouse provides good ventilation and "really helps knock down bacteria and viruses that can hit calves," said Kulick. The calves are moved to the open structure, with a crushed limestone floor, from when they are born to about four months. At the time of the tour, 30 calves were housed in the greenhouse, including some bull calves. There is room for 44 in all.

A double-8 milking parlor (which can someday expand to a double-10, Kulick noted) was installed on the dairy farm, owned by John and Julia Stover, and Ronald Stover, in 1995. Jim Kulick, son-in-law, helps manage the 196 head of registered and grade Holsteins, with about the same number of replacements.

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The Stovers began a small herd on their home farm nearby in 1959. They expanded rapidly three years ago, from 60 to 200 head, building a new facility on the site, incorporating a freestall, a milking parlor, and a new calf greenhouse facility.

The herd on Pennsylvania DHIA records 22,300 pounds of milk, using BST. Feed is all TMR, constantly available to the cows. The milk is sold through the Mount Joy Cooperative. The Stovers are Class I shipper through Federal Order IV. Milking is twice a day, 4:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to a

3,000-pound tank, emptied every other day.

Most of the cattle are homebred. Kulick is now buying all registered cattle to increase the quality and quantity of the Holstein herd.

The oldest cow is Sandy, about nine years old. The big milker is Monica, a 5-year-old who produces 40,000 pounds.

Kulick noted that using AI on the heifers has increased the quality of the herd.

"We've seen a big difference between those heifers and those bred using a bull," said Kulick. The udders are high, the feet and legs are in better shape, and the overall health is a step above what it used to be.

Somatic cell count is kept "as low as possible," he explained to the teachers. "The milk tastes better and cows will milk more."

Mount Joy pays a premium when SCC is kept below 300,000. The farm records about a 200,000 SCC, though it has gone as low as 160,000, Kulick said.

The barn is in need of new frees-

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