

capital expenses, like another piece of equipment," said Ligo.

Ligo tends not to borrow money on a short-term basis. However, since he has never expected milk prices to be as low as long as they are now, he did apply for a line of credit in November. It's mainly for assurance.

"More than anything, I wanted the line of credit to take advantage of the opportunities that come up during low milk price periods," said Ligo. "I also wanted to assure my employees that we didn't have to worry about what we were going to do when the milk price drops."

Ligo relies heavily on his employees to maintain profitability and production on his dairy farm. Five full-time employees help Ligo on the farm, where they milk three times a day.

Working as a region credit manager for Telemark, Inc., his wife Judy also takes care of the calves on the farm. The Ligos have a 23,800-pound herd average, with 890 pounds of fat and 785 pounds of protein.

Ligo attributes his low somatic cell counts, which average around 150,000, and his success in the milking parlor to



Employed off the farm as region credit manager for Telemark, Inc., Judy also helps John on their dairy farm.



Each year John carefully prepares an annual budget for his dairy. That way he can better manage cash flow throughout the coming year.

"excellent communications among milkers on different shifts."

The Ligos pre- and post-dip, use individual paper towels, and milk infected cows last. They also keep a permanent record of everything that happens during each shift.

"Every day is another page in the book," said Ligo. "Employees are expected to write down everything that happened during that milking — what time they started, when they finished, and any problems with the cows. Then the person who

milks the next shift can review the book and know what happened during the last shift."

The Ligos also employ some non-traditional practices in their dairy that have been successful for them. The first is that they never treat mastitis with antibiotics. Instead they use what Ligo terms as "supportive therapy."

The milkers massage udders, rub liniment on the udders, use oxytocin, hydrate the cows through hypertonic saline solution given intravenously, and give cows aspirin and antihistamines.

Another non-traditional practice that the Ligos employ is extending the cows' lactations to 480 days instead of the traditional 320 days in milk. Cows aren't bred back until at least 180 days in lactation. Ligo does this because he believes it creates less stress for their cows.

"Cull-inducing instances in a cow's life are calving, getting use to being back in the milking string, breeding, and during the dry-off and transition period," said Ligo. "If we can stretch those events over 16 months instead of 12 months, we have less forced-cull instances. Cows don't get sick just milking and eating."

The herd's daily average milk production remains at 75 pounds, and the conception rate is 1.6 services per conception. They use BST per the label instructions, beginning usage at about seven weeks into the lactation.

"A lot of farmers believe that extending the lactation just puts days on at the end of the lactation," said Ligo. "But it doesn't. We always dry cows off two months before freshening. We're extending the days between peak milk and breeding."

By breeding the cows later in lactation, Ligo encounters fewer conception problems. "The cow's past peak production. The uterus is in good shape, and she is under less stress. Therefore the animals breed really well. Heat detection is pretty easy, too, because we have a fair number of cows in heat at one time."

John and Judy returned to farming in 1990. John grew up on a dairy farm and ran his father's dairy for about five years, before taking a job with Meadville Farm Credit.

Since 1990, John has been very active in agriculture on both the local and state level. He is chairman of the county agriculture preservation board and serves on the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program board. He has also been recognized as a Master Farmer in 1998 and as the 1993 Outstanding Young Farmer for Pennsylvania.

Both Judy and John serve on the county ag education board and belong to Ebenezer Presbyterian Church. Judy also serves on both the county ag development board and county extension board. The Ligos are members of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

In addition to their Holsteins, the Ligos own 40 head of Scottish Highlands, from which they sell breeding stock.

"They're for fun mostly," said Ligo, who enjoys dairying both for the pleasure and profit of it.

### Ligo's Profitable Tips For Other Dairy Farmers

- 1) Maintain profitability. It allows you to keep your word and be responsible to yourself, your employees, and your suppliers.

## Stop 'em early with long-lasting Warrior T.

Get powerful cutworm control that works fast and lasts. WARRIOR® T insecticide with ZEON™ technology delivers the most effective, longest-lasting cutworm control available. Applied preplant or preemergence, WARRIOR T stops cutworms before they start — and keeps them stopped. So your corn grows strong all season long.

For more information, see your retailer, call our hotline at 800-759-2500 or visit our web site at [zenecaagproducts.com](http://zenecaagproducts.com).



EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST AN INSECTICIDE