

Farmers Speak Out About Milk Prices



JAYNE SEBRIGHT
Lancaster Farming Staff
MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.) — During last week's Mount Joy Dairy Cooperative meeting in Mount Joy, four farmers volunteered to talk about the recent drop in the milk price. Here are their comments.

Gilbert and Darlene Adams of New Bloomfield milk 125 cows and farm 2,000 acres with their four sons. "The milk prices could be worse, but they could be a lot better," said Gilbert. "We just have to watch what we buy and not overspend." The Adams consider themselves fortunate because they didn't get hit as badly with the drought as other areas did. "The 2,000 acres give us something to fall back on when milk prices fall."

Joe and Jeanne Wivell milk 80 cows and farm 250 acres in Columbia. "It's just too low," said Joe. "There is too much manipulation in milk pricing." Joe doesn't see expanding as an answer to the problem. "In essence, we're our own worst enemy. If dairying were more profitable, farmers wouldn't have to expand and drive milk supply up." He admits that the average milk price for the last two years has been excellent. "If we could still average \$14 per hundredweight for this year's milk, even with this low, farmers could stay profitable."



Mike and his wife Lisa Brubaker farm in Mount Joy, where Mike milks 400 cows with his father Luke and brother Tony. "I don't like that milk prices are falling," said Mike. "But we have had two years of good prices, so they were bound to fall sometime." Still Mike admits that the prices dropped farther than he expected. "It will make margins really tight for the next several months. But at least the feed costs are low so that will help weather the situation."



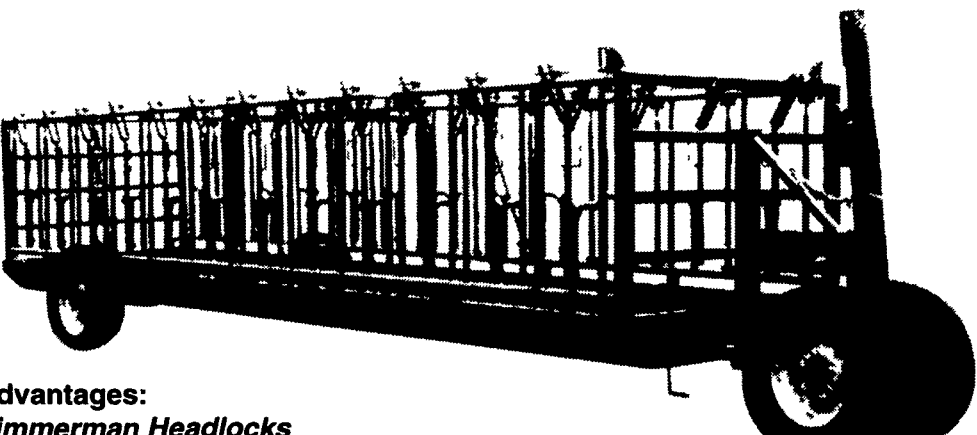
Mel and Sandy Hoffer milk 40 cows and farm 110 acres in Elizabethtown. "The low milk price can make you feel negative about a lot of things," said Mel. "It doesn't seem like it matters what we do because we can't control it. It gets somewhat frustrating thinking about the milk price going down when the bills just keep going up." The Hoffers plan to tighten their belts to get through the next couple of months. "We're not going to make any purchases that aren't necessary, and hopefully things will change."



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