

Millmont Farmer Keeps Busy Schedule To Maintain Successful Dairy

JAYNE SEBRIGHT

Lancaster Farming Staff

MILLMONT (Union Co.) —

Every morning Joseph Snyder of Millmont gets up at 5:30 a.m. to help his wife Annette and son Joe, Jr., with the morning milking. Then he gets in his mini-van

and begins his full-time job as an ABS technician.

In the evening, he typically doesn't finish with the chores until 9 p.m. During May and June, he might work as late as 11 p.m. some evenings.

He does this seven days a

week, working more than 100 hours a week. And he does it with a smile on his face and a tremendous sense of humor.

Why does he work so hard? Because, like most dairymen, farming is in his blood.

"I was born into farming," said Snyder. "Even though it's a lot of hard work, a farm is a good place to raise a family. There isn't much free time. But then that keeps us out of trouble."

The Snyders milk 63 Holstein cows and raise about 60 heifers on their 273-acre farm, where Joseph has lived ever since he was born. In 1978, Joseph and Annette purchased the farm from his parents.

With Joseph working away from the farm, Annette and Joe Jr. handle most of the milking. Joe Jr. also takes care of feeding the cows.

The Snyder's oldest daughter Chris Kauffman also helps out on the farm, feeding calves and heifers, keeping the feed troughs clean, and helping with the morning milking. She and her husband Donny have two children, Kaylene and Colton, who both enjoy visiting the farm.

Joseph started relief breeding for ABS in 1995, mainly to help fund his youngest daughter Jennifer's college education. Jennifer now works for a pharmaceutical company in Philadelphia. In 1997, Joseph became a full-time A.I. technician.

The Snyders have won numerous awards for the way they manage their herd, which includes maintaining a rolling somatic cell count of about 63,000.

In 1999, they traveled to Madison, Wis., for the World Dairy Expo, where they received the National Dairy Quality Award. This prestigious award is only given to one farm in the entire nation each year.

"That was the first time we ever went to the World Dairy Expo," said Snyder. "And the best thing about the trip was that it was paid for, so it didn't take anything out of our pockets."

Their herd averages 23,181 pounds on DHIA, with .869 pounds fat and 774 pounds protein. They attribute their low somatic cell count to carefully monitoring their herd.

"When we get the DHIA records each month, the first thing we check is what our somatic cell count was for the month," said Snyder. "Then we flip the report over to the back, and if we don't have any high SCC cows, we know we did a good job."

If the Snyders see a cow's linear score approaching four, they take action. In December, they treated two high SCC cows after they saw their DHIA report.

"When I looked at the fact that the one cow milked 111 pounds in November and only 78 pounds in December, I could tell that high somatic cell count was robbing me of some milk," said Snyder. "But then, after treating her, that cow's somatic cell count dropped to .4 and her milk production jumped back to 111 pounds in January."

The other cow dropped to a linear score of 0 in January after treatment.



Joseph closely monitors his herd's production and somatic cell count because they both have a tremendous impact on the bottom line.

"When you find a high somatic cell cow, you can either ignore the problem or fix it," said Snyder. "If you ignore it, it can cost you the bonus from your cooperative. It can also cost you milk production."

According to Snyder, if his somatic cell count was to go over 100,000, his premium from his milk cooperative, Dairy Farmers of America, would fall from 55 cents to 35 cents.

"When you figure 100,000 pounds of milk produced in a month at a rate of 20 cents less, that is \$200 dollars in lost profit for that month." And that doesn't count the lost profits due to the drop in milk production caused by high somatic cell counts.

In the barn, the Snyders closely monitor their cows for any abnormalities in the udder or in the milk when they strip them out before milking. Each cow gets stripped four to six times before milking. They also use individual towels to prevent from spreading infection. All milking help must wear latex gloves when they milk, and the cows are pre- and post-dipped with a solution from ABS.

"If we see a cow with a swollen udder or anything in the milk that looks suspicious, we

use the CMT paddle to check them out," said Snyder. "If she has subclinical mastitis, we take a sample, identify it, and freeze it."

The Snyders will hold the infected cow's milk from the milk tank and start some type of treatment immediately. If the treatment doesn't work to clear up the infection, then they can take the frozen sample to the veterinarian.

"Within 24 hours, the vet can identify what bug is causing the problem," said Snyder. "Then his diagnosis will determine the appropriate treatment."

From experience, the Snyders have found that treating cows six days works best.

"I've found in the past that, if you treat a cow three or four days, by the time their milk is good the mastitis usually flares up again," said Snyder. "That's where the CMT paddle really comes into play. You should monitor that infection closely."

Snyder encourages other farmers to maintain low somatic cell counts through the following suggestions:

- 1) Cows should be kept as clean and as dry as possible.
- 2) Farmers should work closely with their veterinarians

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Annette and Joseph show off an article published by Dairy Farmers of America on their nationally-recognized low somatic cell herd.



Pre- and post-dipping cows is a big part of keeping somatic cell counts low on the Snyder farm. Annette fills the dip cups up to make sure they're ready for each milking.



The Snyders scrap their tie stalls out several times a day to keep the cows as clean and dry as possible, keeping bacteria away from the cows' udders.



Joseph Jr. strips the cows out several times before milking to make sure no abnormalities show up in the milk. On the Snyder farm, latex gloves are a must when milking.