

Dairy Day Message

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ask ourselves today as producers are, what are the implications of this and where do I fit?" Snider was quick to admit that there's room for everyone in the industry.

"There are a number of things that are pushing things in the dairy industry as I see it," said Snider. "One of the things we see out there are fewer milk handlers. The whole area of milk marketing is concentrating into a smaller number of handlers. Specialization is another big change that I think is taking place in the dairy industry today."

Another shift that Snider sees, especially in western New York, are the number of satellite farms which would be run much like a subsidiary of a bigger, more established farm.

"I see an attitude change. I see an increased number of people who say we can make some money in this dairy business and we don't need to be enslaved to the business like we have been historically, and I think that's a healthy attitude," noted Snider.

The solution for many farmers is to specialize or carve out a niche in some area of expertise.

"You might think that all the opportunities are out there for the large businesses, and if we don't watch it, we'll be fooled by that thought," said Snider. He quickly admits that getting bigger is certainly not for everyone. However, he noted that everyone, no matter what the size of the farm, can get better. For some, the choice is to get out of the dairy business entirely.

"This is not an expansion seminar," noted Snider. "We have to think where we are in the industry and we have to position ourselves so we can grow. We have to run a business that's profitable. Once we get profitable, we have to grow in some areas. We need to grow every year to remain competitive," he said.

Snider pushed specialization for many growers.

"I think all of us as producers can select the part of the industry that we can participate in. If

my family has decided that we're not the one to have more cows, more barns, more land, more equipment, more debt, more headaches . . . and I decide that that's not for me and I really feel very uncomfortable with that, then our opportunity is to say, 'what part of the dairy industry can I carve out for me and my business.' I think small producers have a great potential for taking a role as a specialist in the dairy industry."

Specialized roles include custom heifer raising, custom harvesting, or other portions of the business.

In order to drive his point home, Snider welcomed Marty Smith, Ron Kline, Glenn Gorrell, and Jerry Spencer to the stage. Each panelist brought a unique viewpoint to light.

Although still operating a small dairy, Marty Smith has begun a contract heifer-raising facility.

"Three years ago the milk price was bad and we had a bad crop year and we started looking at other things. First I went to work for other people. After working for myself, I found I



Gary Snider, farm business consultant with Farm Credit of Western New York, encouraged producers to carve out a niche in today's market at the 2000 Bradford County Dairy Day.



Bradford County commissioners John Sullivan, Janet Lewis, and Tina Pickett taste each pie to select a winner as Marian Hennip, third from left, serves the samples.

didn't like working for others, so we looked into raising heifers," said Smith.

After careful planning and discussion, their facility was built in November 1998. In less than four months, their facilities were full.

"The banker we used to work

with said there was not a market for this," noted Smith. "We proved them wrong."

The Smiths charge on a per-head per-day basis. They also take care of the necessities and whatever the client wants. They have also left options open for the future.

"We take pride in what we do," noted Smith.

For Ron Kline, bringing two sons into the business lead to a major herd expansion and the building of new facilities.

"We studied this for two years and visited lots of other facilities before we built what we have. We have left room for more expansion if we choose to do that in the future."

Expanding the milking herd still left the Klines with some dilemmas. They are considering whether to have their heifers custom raised freeing additional space for more milking cows or to continue raising their own replacements. Nutrient management requirements are also on his mind. He is looking at a system to manage the manure flow.

Many factors went into the decision to expand their herd.

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Greg Jelliff of the Guthrie Rural Health and Safety team gives a tetanus booster shot to Richard Kauffman. The shots were provided free of charge to all participants who requested one.



Lisa Holden, assistant professor of dairy and animal science from Penn State University, helped farmers develop a job description for their employees. She also highlighted the importance of thinking of your employees as an asset.

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A producer panel made up of Bradford County farmers illustrated Gary Snider's points about specialization. Marty Smith, a custom heifer raiser, Ron Kline, partner in a large dairy, Glenn Gorrell who intensively grazes his cows and Jerry Spencer, a custom harvester, made up the panel.