

Kaufmans Prove Small Dairies Can Survive

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FRIEDENS (Somerset Co.) —

Dairy farmers Allen and Gloria Kaufman maintain that with wise management a small time farming operation can survive in this day and age.

The one-income family refuses to believe the often-heard hype that bigger is better.

"We control what we do," said the dairyman whose intensive grazing operation supports a 65-head milking herd and 55 head of young cattle.

"What is unique about the farm is it is the only source of income," the conservationist added. Kaufman in 1998 received the Outstanding Conservation Farmer Award from the Somerset County Conservation District.

"What we want to do is stay small," Gloria said, emphasizing how the system of intensive grazing accomplishes this end by greatly reducing the costs of labor, feed and machinery maintenance.

"We would like to stay where we are working with our cows and our family rather than managing people," said the busy wife and mother. She feeds calves and helps with milking.

Their stewardship doesn't just concern livestock and 218 acres of land. They are just as conscientious about parenting their children and being involved in their lives. Jeff, 19, attends Mt. Aloysius College in Cresson. Justin, 15, was born with farming in his blood and Janna is 10 and loves to play soccer. In work or play there is a balance of responsibility and support for one another.

"We will stay where we are for the next four years until Justin is out of school," said the young man's dad.

"I like being around cows and being outside," Justin said. "I am not a book person."

In the teen-ager, apparently there, is somewhat of an artist lurking, too, especially in the area of wood crafts. The finished product, usually resembles a cow or some other feature of Grazing Valley Farm.

Jeff is the opposite of his brother and is studying occupational therapy at college. In fact, this summer in that same department, he has part time employment, but his parents were elated when he made the independent decision to pass up full time work in order to assist his dad on the farm.

It's even nicer that Jeff's girlfriend, Mandy Kristoff from Mineral Point, doesn't mind helping with the milking chores. Both of them are sophomores at Mt. Aloysius College.

Janna is expected to pull a share of the load but has to ad-



Allen and Gloria Kaufman of Friedens are gathered at the Grazing Valley Farm sign with their children, Jeff, Justin and Janna.

here to a schedule of 30 minutes daily to practice piano lessons and another 20 minutes practicing the violin.

Carl Gindlesperger from Holsopple, Gloria's father, is another helper who enjoys working in the fields, which gives him a chance to hang out with the grandkids.

In the 65-stall stanchion barn every cow knows the stall with her own name on it. Twice a day when her udder is full of milk each bovine lady sidles in to her personal cubicle and allows herself to get connected to the pipeline system.

Kaufman said that if a problem develops for the relief milker his job is made a lot easier when there is cow identification at the stall as well as on her eartag.

They praise the faithfulness relief milker of Tim Lehman, who unfailingly responds when they call. His dependability is a blessing, they said, because at brief intervals Kaufman and his wife can get away to watch their kids participate in sports and other activities. It compensates for not having family vacations.

"In the summer time I can get away a few hours to be with the family," Kaufman said.

During soccer and basketball seasons, milking times can fluctuate an hour in either direction but generally, the schedule is 6 a.m. and 5 p.m.

"Two-thirds of the herd freshens in the spring so I'll be producing milk on an intensive graz-

ing system," Kaufman said. "What we are trying to do on the intensive grazing system is produce 18,000 pounds of milk feeding 15 pounds of cracked corn, one pound of soybean meal and 10 pounds of corn silage with the remaining nutrition coming from grazing and mineral packages," he explained.

"We are trying to hold at that," he said. "We are not producing like the confinement herds, but then their feed costs are a lot higher. We are trying to produce the most amount of milk at the lowest cost."

With the exception of a few Guernsey cows that belong to Justin, primarily the dairy herd is comprised of Holsteins.

Some 15 calf hutches individually house the newborns and lessen the potential for transfer of disease. At about 2-3 months of age the calves are put with older livestock.

In the spring, the animals are rotated amongst the 15 paddocks on some 30 acres of grassland. Meanwhile, after haylage on another 30 acres is made with the first cutting, Kaufman creates 10 additional paddocks in that area using polywire fencing to enhance the system through summer and fall.

The kids have to help. On the four-wheeler, for instance, Justin might control the chunky spool of polywire and drive the vehicle while Jeff and his dad pound the lightweight poles in the ground to run the wire.

The paddocks have individual water, a 100-gallon water tub access to each paddock. There is never a shortage, Kaufman said.

The cows are inside the barn only as long as it takes to milk them. The advantage of being outside is that their hooves stay softer and there is better herd health, Kaufman said.

In the winter when the cows are housed in the barn, once a day they are still taken outside for exercise, weather permitting.

"The whole farm is laid out in contour farm strip cropping," Kaufman said.

Kaufman practices crop rotation. For the first two years on 25 acres he raises corn for silage. Then with oats and nitrogen-rich peas for a ground cover, he proceeds with grass the next several years, rotating with corn on about 12 new acres each year. "We do a cover crop because we

don't need to spray for weeds," said the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau member.

The first time through 100 acres he makes haylage. For the second cutting, after deleting 30 acres for the 10 new paddocks, he makes the small square bales on some 70 acres. The third cutting is haylage.

The conservation measures at Grazing Valley Farm have included a heavy use protection area. Farm runoff is funneled through concrete curbing, catching solid waste from the cattle. From there it runs through a grass filled filter area before it can reach a small stream flowing into the Beaver Dam Creek.

Grassed waterways, subsurface tile drainage, cross fencing, stabilized stream crossing, roof runoff controls, a diversion, spring development, and stream bank

fencing on the farm are other measures Kaufman has implemented with help and guidance from the Somerset Conservation District.

Alley stabilization was the big conservation project in 1998. In the near future he plans to do more of the same with a grant from the Stoneycreek Watershed.

He is also participating in a nutrient management plan, keeping track of crops taken off and manure put on.

"We are going to do more alleyways and stream bank fencing," Kaufman said.

Very near the house, with native brown trout in it, a gurgling stream runs through the property. Kaufman says even in the drought the water never slowed up.

The couple are leaders in the Dairydells 4-H Club where their kids are members and have dairy projects.

Justin and Janna attend the Johnstown Christian School where their dad is a member of the school board, their mom is an active volunteer, and Jeff, recently, coached a junior high basketball team.

Gloria belongs to the Somerset County Dairy Promotion Committee. She and her husband do a dual service for the school and the local dairy industry by volunteering to sell ice cream and milkshakes at the school's arts and crafts festival.

They also give of their time to the church, and Gloria will direct Vacation Bible School at the Thomas Mennonite Church.

She is the bookkeeper and makes her entries in longhand, although, she is gaining computer literacy thanks to a related class at the cooperative extension office.

Although she has very little time for gardening, her dream is to have a small greenhouse. The site is already picked out.

On their recent 21st anniversary, the Kaufman sons did the evening and morning milking and treated their parents to dinner out and a getaway that allowed their dad the luxury of sleeping in for the first time in years.



Gloria Kaufman is a very involved farm wife who helps with feeding and milking the dairy herd. At one of the 15 calf hutches, she is with a 3-week old calf.



Allen Kaufman built this alleyway and stream bank crossing several years ago with help and guidance from the Somerset Conservation District. It is solid underneath.