

# Franklin Couple Sees Bright Future In Dairying

DAVE LEFEVER  
*Lancaster Farming Staff*

MERCERSBURG (Franklin Co.) — From production to promotion, Tim and Alexa Stoner are deeply involved in the dairy business.

Tim grew up milking cows with his father and uncles on Hijos Hill Farm between Greencastle and Mercersburg. Now he is president of a family corporation that includes his brother and four cousins. His father, Bob Stoner; several uncles, and an aunt are also still involved on the farm.

Alexa helps out with the milking herd of about 630 Holsteins on Hijos Hill — mainly on weekends when she is not out promoting milk in her work as industry relations specialist with the American Dairy Association (ADA).

Tim's duties involve "a little bit of everything," including feeding the cows, keeping herd and crop records, and "making most of the crop decisions" for the 1,600 acres under cultivation.

The corporation conducts monthly meetings to discuss business and vote on important decisions. Minutes are kept by Todd, Tim's brother and secretary of the corporation.

With the younger generation now in its second year at the helm of Hijos Hill, Inc., "Things are going real well," Tim said.

As president, Tim said he tries to keep routine jobs on schedule as much as possible and alternate milking chores. His approach to the business is not rigid.

"Our meetings are kind of free flow," he said.

With full-time help from his father and varying degrees of involvement from wives and uncles, Hijos Hill has no employees from outside the family.

The Stoners have chosen to use live bulls on the farm instead of artificial insemination for breeding. Tim said it is his father's job to find new bulls on a regular basis to keep up genetic diversity. About 20 bulls are housed in the free stall barn along with the milking herd.

According to Tim, the Stoner family switched to using bulls about five years ago to save the labor of watching for cows in heat. The bulls do a good job breeding the herd, he said.

Safety can be an issue in having bulls on the farm, but Tim said the family is proactive in heading off potential dangers.

"If we have problems (with a bull's temperament) we move him out pretty quick," he said.

Rolling herd average for the 630 Holsteins on Hijos

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