

# Time Spent Planning, Designing

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other weekend off. They know from now until Christmas exactly what days they're going to work," Gary said.

The Klines are also sensitive to the workload that the employees carry.

"We want them to know that we're not going to ask them to do something that we're not willing to do," said Gary. "They get a real kick out of it when I have to ask them how they've been doing something."

As for the future, the Klines are always willing to consider new ideas. This past spring they completed a hospital barn to better monitor those cows with special needs and plan to learn as much as they can from neighbors who are trying new things.

"Things will be changing. Hopefully we'll be able to change with them," said Gary.

### Brown Family

Priorities have changed for Roger and Kathy Brown as well. Rather than building from the ground up, they chose to retrofit a double-eight herringbone parlor into their existing tiestall barn.

Five years ago, they decided

to expand their herd to increase cash flow. They didn't want to get really big, so they chose to grow from 75 cows to 180.

In order to make it happen, the Browns first built a freestall facility and milked in the backside of that while building the parlor. They then moved lots of concrete in one section of the barn, while keeping tiestalls in another section of the barn for any cows with special needs.

Cost was a major factor in their decision to expand in this manner. By using their existing facility, they eliminated the need to build a separate building. They also were able to save some costs by buying a second freestall barn as a package and hiring a local contractor to build it.

The tiestall barn was very labor-intensive and their move helped streamline the milking process. They now milk three times a day, averaging 80 pound a day per cow. The parlor allows them to milk 60 cows an hour. The Browns are happy with the results of their expansion.

"I'm satisfied with this parlor," said Roger. "If I was building from scratch, I might have done it differently, but we did this for 40 to 50 percent of

what it would have cost to build a new facility."

The bottom line for the Browns is that all things have meshed together well.

"We're glad we did it. It was a big change," said Roger.

Said Kathy, "We're still fine-tuning it. We keep on working at what we have."

### Gorrell Family

Glenn and Robin Gorrell took another route to expansion. They have been working at updating facilities since they started farming in 1981. They milk 390 cows in a double-eight parallel parlor which is expandable to double-12, three times a day. Cows are housed in a six-row greenhouse barn.

"We're kind of do-it-yourselfers," said Glenn. "We decided on building a greenhouse barn for the freestalls largely because of cost."

Because they started farming completely on their own, equity was an issue.

"When we built the first 144 stalls in the first part of the greenhouse barn, we had about \$700 per stall in it. The most important thing is that we didn't lose any equity by building a big barn. That got us to where we

could build on because we didn't have that much debt," said Glenn. "That enabled us to get the freestall built up and to add a nice parlor."

Cow comfort is a big consideration for the Gorrells. Bedding with sand not only provides a comfortable place for the cows to rest, but gives an added benefit in the winter when floors might otherwise become slippery.

"We took the cows out of a tiestall barn and put them in a freestall barn and they accepted the stalls right away," said Glenn. "We've never had a cow split herself. There's lots of sand to get good footing."

The Gorrells also have tried to keep up with their rotational grazing right through the expansion. However, they are constantly working on schedule adjustments with the three groups of cattle.

"This past year, all three groups were out twice a day for a while. The higher groups are still out once a day," Gorrell said. "It has been harder than we expected. When we were in a tiestall barn, our goal was to feed no stored feed in the summer. Sometimes it worked and other times it didn't."

As cow numbers have increased, the challenges are becoming more difficult. Although they will continue to rotationally graze their cattle, they will probably adjust schedules dramatically next summer.

As for the greenhouse barns, the Gorrells couldn't be happier with them.

"We're really happy and the barns have worked out well. Sometimes you do things and it doesn't turn out right. With this, we're glad it did," said Glenn.

### Potter County Dairies

Three Potter County dairies were on the agenda for the second day of the tour.

Rick VanEtten was quick to point out that trying something different isn't always the best way to go.

"The parlor is 25 years old. We retrofitted it with a nine-cow parallel parlor on one side and a five-unit herringbone parlor on the other. I decided to do it because I thought it would push more cows through, but it doesn't work," said Rick.

Although the facilities have proved to offer a labor savings over their former tiestall barn, they are in the planning stages to build a double-10 or double-12 herringbone parlor in the spring.

"We have up-to-date equipment, and we'll move the computerized feeders and automatic identification units into the new parlor," he said. "We'll use the old parlor for the holding area."

VanEtten also plans on increasing cow numbers from 265 milking to 350-400.

"I hope to milk enough to have a trailer load of milk every other day," VanEtten said. "You've got to be looking toward the future. Without a trailer load of milk, you don't have a lot of bargaining power. If you don't grow, business is going to die."

For Melvin and Tim Easton, looking toward the future means another expansion project.

They milk 330 cows in a double-12 parallel parlor. Next year they plan to expand their freestall and increase cow numbers to more than 500. They will probably also finish out their parlor at that time, bringing it to a double-16.


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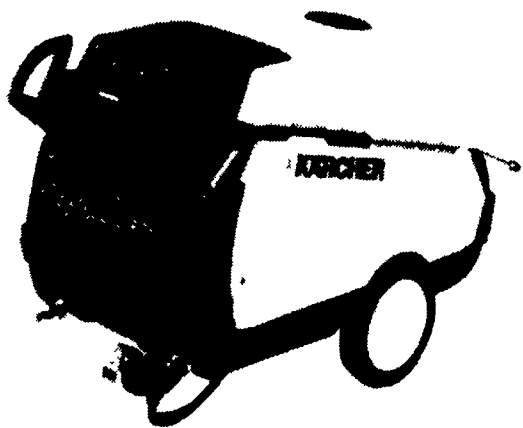
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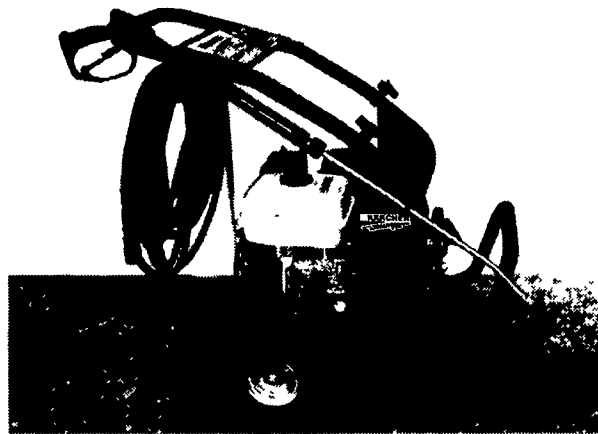
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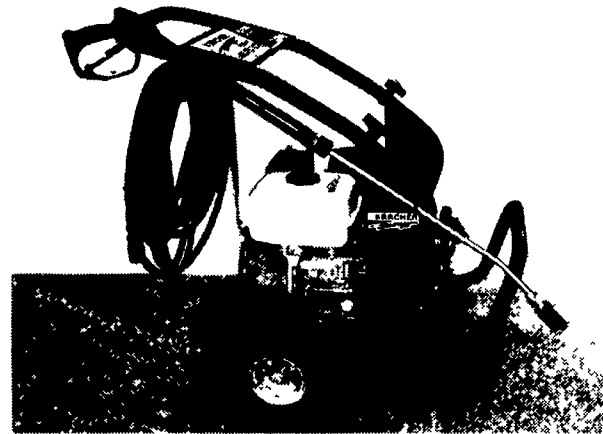
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