

Perrydell Connects Cows, Consumers

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Editor's note: This feature is part of a series that highlights direct marketing operations. These businesses are a part of the Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Conference tour. The conference will take place Feb. 20-23 at the Holidome in York.

LEADER HEIGHTS (York Co.) — When George and Roger Perry purchased bottling equipment and opened their bottling plant in 1963, they could not see the varieties of milk, ice cream, and even the farm market that would follow in the years to come.

Today George's sons Greg, Tom, and Chip, however, are grateful for the brothers' enterprising move. The farm, bottling business, and farm market now support the entirety of the Perry family, which has grown to include Greg's wife Laurie and Tom's wife Donna, plus the children that have joined the family.

While Tom takes care of the bottling plant, Greg supervises the milk and crop production, and Chip works on the store and paperwork facet of the business. In addition two full-time herdsmen help milk the 150 cows and replacement heifers.

The Perrys own 170 acres and rent an additional 300 acres for the feed corn and hay production.

"Roger came home from college in the late 1950s and realized that he wouldn't be able to make money on the traditional methods, so he decided to come up with a way to stay on the farm," said Tom Perry.

"He consulted three or four nearby juggers and decided that selling milk directly to the public was the way to make money," he

said. "It has proven to be the best way to keep the family on the farm." The original price was 75 cents a gallon.

"This farm basically supports five families, which is pretty unheard of," said Donna. "We have a very good location here. It's built up all around and we're close to the expressway. Word-of-mouth has pretty much advertised this place for more than 30 years."

Diversity

"Producers have to be able to diversify," said Perry. "You can make money on a small herd, but we wanted to be able to carry over to other generations and all make money on the same farm."

"We're lucky because we got started early and have the bigger, more traditional equipment," said Perry, noting that other producers beginning their own jugging operation could perhaps start their own jugging operation with the mini-dairy equipment. A mini dairy may, unfortunately, suppress growth of the business because of the limits of the smaller equipment.

The mini dairy equipment, said Perry, has spurred a resurgence of interest in on-farm jugging. Producers from Pennsylvania and Maryland, and even as far away as Nebraska, have come to Perrydell to observe the operation.

The milk comes straight from the parlor into the store area raw, where it is processed. Although the store uses most of the milk, the surplus is picked up two to three times a week.

Expansion Options

Flavored milk or growth in the ice cream facets are possible expansion opportunities. "Ice cream has become pretty big," said Perry. The cream is shipped

off the farm to be returned as ice cream.

"We're planning to focus on ice cream sales — to make a more parklike atmosphere and add a walk-up window," he said. Customers come to Perrydell for ice cream because they enjoy coming to the farm and appreciate the relaxing atmosphere, say the Perrys. The calves that are housed in hutches nearby are also a draw.

"We're thinking about adding walking trails to people can come and spend a little time," said Donna. Plans include planting trees, adding a split rail fence, and trees to the area.

Milk, however, is the main reason people stop, according to Perry. "Except, perhaps, in summer for ice cream," said Donna.

The country store, remodeled and expanded in 1994, a refined version of the 1963 store, is almost outgrown already. In addition, "I'd like to get new bottling equipment to speed things up," said Perry.

Expansion, however, will be thoroughly researched. "We don't want to get too big and lose the small-store feel," said Donna. "We want to grow but remain a country store."

The milk comes in whole, two percent, skim, and chocolate varieties. The family also delivers their milk to other nearby small stores. The unique, heavy plastic returnable bottles are also a selling point, believe the Perrys.

The store has 26 employees, most of them part-time help ex-

cept for a full-time manager.

Opening The Farm

Besides hosting farm tours for the general community, the Perrys often take 4-H dairy clubs through the operation.

A fall festival this year also drew the public to the operation. "We saw big results after that," said Perry. A small newspaper advertisement about the event drew over 1,000 people to the food, crafts, straw maze, and farm tours.

In addition to being a popular ice cream destination for children, the farm hosts school tour in the spring several times a week.

"It gives them a picture of production-to-processing," said Perry.

Northeast Order Uniform Price Announced For December

BOSTON, Mass. — Erik F. Rasmussen, market administrator for the Northeast Marketing Area, has announced that the statistical uniform price paid by milk dealers (handlers) regulated under the Northeast Order for December 2001 is \$13.72 per hundredweight (\$1.18 per gallon) for milk delivered to plants located in Suffolk County, Mass. (Boston). The December statistical uniform price is \$13.62 for delivery to plants in New York, N.Y., and \$13.52 for delivery to plants in Philadelphia.

The statistical uniform price is the benchmark minimum producer blend price paid to dairy farmers, prior to allowable deductions, for milk containing 3.5 percent butterfat, 2.99 percent protein, and 5.69 percent other solids. The price received by an individual dairy farmer will vary as the component composition of a farm's milk differs from the es-

tablished benchmarks and by the location of the plant(s) to which the farm's milk is delivered.

Rasmussen also stated that the producer price differential (PPD) for November is \$1.92 per hundredweight for milk delivered to plants located in Suffolk County, Mass. The PPD represents each producer's share of the value generated by the marketwide pool on a hundredweight basis. The PPD, which is added to the payment producers receive for their milk's components, is adjusted for the location of the receiving plant. The statistical uniform price and PPD decrease by scheduled amounts the more distant the plant receiving producer milk is from Suffolk County, Mass.

The Class prices for milk pooled in November are as follows: Class I, \$15.23 (Suffolk County, Mass.); Class II, \$12.61; Class III, \$11.80; and Class IV, \$11.79. Comparable prices for December

2000 were: Class I \$15.38, Class II \$13.97, Class III \$9.37, and Class IV price \$13.27. The component values for December are protein, \$1.9782 per pound; butterfat, \$1.4322 per pound; other solids, \$0.1517 per pound; and nonfat solids, \$0.7799 per pound.

Milk receipts from producers totaled 2.078 billion pounds. Class I utilization, milk processed as beverage milk, was 43.8 percent of producer milk receipts. The average Class I utilization was 47.9 percent in December 2000.

The manufacture of Class II products such as cream, ice cream, yogurt, and cottage cheese utilized 15.3 percent of producer milk. Milk used to manufacture Class III products such as cheese (American and Italian) and evaporated and condensed products utilized 29.3 percent of total milk receipts. Class IV usage (butter, nonfat and whole milk powder) equaled 11.6 percent of the total.

New Extension Program Offers Vegetable School

CHAMBERSBURG (Cumberland Co.) — Market gardening and larger vegetable production systems can offer good opportunities to add substantially to a farm's bottom line.

Penn State Cooperative Extension has organized a two-day vegetable production school targeted to those seeking to get started in this rapidly expanding field.

This two-day program will cover all of the major issues related to commercial vegetable production in a concise, fast-paced format.

Topics will include: Growing Systems, Marketing, Season Extension, Irrigation, Weed Control, Pest Management, Post-Har-

vest Handling, Crop Scheduling and much more.

New growers, new hires, and those interested in starting a produce operation are encouraged to attend this program.

Vegetable School will be conducted Feb. 12 and 13, at the Cumberland County Cooperative Extension office in Carlisle. This facility is convenient to the PA Turnpike (Rt. 76), Rt. 81 and numerous motels.

Cost of the program is \$95 and includes all handout materials, lunches, and break snacks. Pre-registration is required by Feb. 5. For more information or registration brochures, contact Steve Bogash at (717) 263-9226.

Pennsylvania Milk Production Down Just Under 1 Percent In November

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Milk production in Pennsylvania during November 2001 totaled 870 million pounds, down 0.9 percent from last year's production, according to the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service (PASS).

The number of milk cows in the state during the month aver-

aged 596,000 head, unchanged from October and 10,000 less than November 2000.

Production per cow averaged 1,460 pounds in November, 40 pounds less than October but 35 pounds more than November 2000.

Milk production in the 20 states surveyed during November 2001 totaled 11.4 billion pounds, up 0.4 percent compared to production during November 2000.

October revised production, at 11.7 billion pounds, was down 0.7 percent from October 2000.

The number of milk cows on farms averaged 7.73 million head, 78,000 head less than a year earlier, and 8,000 head more than October 2001.

Production per cow averaged 1,480 pounds for November, 21 pounds more than November 2000.

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