

Amidst Challenge Of Urban Pressure, York Farm Family Continues To Raise Beef

(Continued from Page A35)

"It's just the love of it. I just enjoy farming, and I do think there can be a future. We're willing to try new things," such as not only a pumpkin stand but also a meat store that the family operated for more than a year in the town.

Community Involvement Important

Staying involved in the community will prove key to a farm operation's friendly relationship with neighbors, said Gross.

Daniel is president of the South Central Cattlemen's Association and on the board of the Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association. His wife, Tina, is a membership processor for the York County Farm Bureau. Steven Jr. is a director of the York County Farm Bureau, and his wife Becky is on the school board.

Steven has served on the township board, Daniel sits on the zoning hearing board, and Steve Jr. is a township supervisor. In addition, they are involved with church, Jaycees, and the Lions Club.

"If you're going to complain about what's going on in your township, you need to be involved," said Gross. The leadership



The smoke of nuclear power plant Three Mile Island, less than five miles away, hovers in the background.

positions also allow the family to know what's going on right away, he said.

They also host day care centers or school groups for tours on the farm. Although its purpose was to generate extra income, a "Farmer Dan's Pumpkin Stand" has also proven to build good relations, because guests may also have the opportunity to walk around the farm.

"When you farm in the community that you live in and people know you, they are more sympathetic," said Phyllis.

Especially when it is time to spray the crop, for instance, people can be reassured that the family is using good farming practices. "We farm here and we live here — of course were concerned" with safety and a clean environment, she noted.

"We try to be courteous. We

don't spread manure before a big heavy downpour or on a Saturday." They have also gone through nutrient management training and are Beef Quality Assurance certified producers.

In addition, changing lifestyles have actually led to fewer opportunities to complain. With the onset of air conditioning and weekend trips with their boat or to their hunting lodge, said Steven, "people just aren't there anymore to do any complaining."

Many neighbors are more concerned about losing the open land to development, said Phyllis.

The family also keeps the land open for public hiking or hunting to build further relationships with the community. "It's part of being a good neighbor," said Gross.

The growth that surrounds the farm has brought escalating traf-

fic, according to Phyllis. Since good fences make good neighbors, "we keep a good eye on our fence and work hard to keep the cows off the road," said Gross.

The Cattle Business

After the Gross family got out of the dairy business in 1966 for labor reasons, steers have been a part of the farm.

The division of labor has switched, according to Daniel, who mainly takes care of the beef animals. He has a degree in ag engineering while his brother, who maintains the crops, has a degree in animal husbandry. The brothers graduated from SUNY Cobleskill.

"Both of us couldn't be involved with both aspects," he said. "We needed to specialize." In 1995 they also added 11 brood cows, a number that has grown to 137 head, with bred heifers.

Most of the cows calves in the spring, with the majority of them born in March or April.

"The cows were a pretty good PR (public relations) move," said Gross. The neighbors, he said, enjoy watching the cattle and calves.

The cattle are divided into weight groups on four of the properties. The 400-700-pound cattle are brought onto Daniel's farm, the receiving lot, where they are vaccinated, dewormed, tagged, and monitored in the pasture for 30 days.

Since they purchase their cattle from sale barns, as well as private

sources, they believe that the time spent backgrounding their own cattle is necessary.

"It's still fun to go to the markets," said Gross, who does much of the buying. "I've been going to the market since I was old enough to walk."

When the animals reach 700-1,000-pounds they are moved in groups of 50-60 at a time to the next farm, which has rations tailored to fit their needs, before they are moved to the home farm to finish for market.

They buy cattle (they feed steers and heifers) year-round and send out three loads a month. The family does their own trucking.

The farm has weathered ups and downs in the cattle business. "You have to hang in there year in and year out — you can't jump in and out of it," according to the market situation, he said.

An additional challenge this year came in the form of the drought, which took their corn crop down to a quarter of its capacity. They may purchase corn to finish the cattle, or sell a few head before they are finished — both short-term solutions, hopes Gross. They started feeding the brood herd July 15 this year, which they usually begin in mid-October.

"I always knew I wanted to be in farming," Daniel said. Over the years cattle have proven to be his favorite part of the vocation.

He spent some time crunching numbers to determine if the farm would be more profitable if it were entirely fenced for a cow-calf operation.

However, the number of head to make it feasible, plus the thought of late-night cow checks, has put that idea to rest, he said.

Your Cows Will Thank You

HERD the NEWS?

Patz Vertical Mixers Outperform the Competition!

- Process all types of dry hay and silage to a consistent length?
- Consistently mix small dry cow batches?
- Consistently and completely mix all feed stuffs?
- Thoroughly clean out?
- Maintain original feed structure?

Don't take our word for it! See a Patz vertical mixer today!

Generator Systems

Diesel or Propane, 10-500 KW, Agricultural and Industrial. New, Used or Reconditioned

Martin Diesel Services

Shop (570) 658-5303
Office (570) 922-4494



WE INSTALL COMPLETE DUST SYSTEMS

- Blowers
- Pipe
- Cyclones
- Bins

STOLTZFUS WELDING & REPAIR

76 S. Vintage Rd., Paradise, PA 17562
717-442-9148

CEDAR CREST EQUIPMENT 800-646-6601 717-866-1888

339 King Street, Myerstown PA 17067

Parts Stores: East Earl—717-354-0584 • Quarryville—717-806-0484