

# Bright Future

(Continued from Page 11)

production in this region, which sees about 15 inches of rain and five inches of snow a year.

In the area of Lea County, where New Direction Dairy is situated, water rights cost about \$400 per acre. Open land, without water rights, sells for \$100-200 per acre, Alan said.

One irrigation "pivot" system covers 100 to 125 acres. This year, the McCauleys had one pivot in place to irrigate the corn they harvested for silage. According to Alan, they plan to install two more pivot systems. He hopes to purchase another 80 acres of water rights to cover the supply for the dairy animals.

"Water is one of the key issues," Alan said. "Water is basically one of the things I worry about the most."

Each township in New Mexico is allotted a certain share of water rights, while water in nearby Texas is still handled strictly as a private commodity. This gives Texas landowners the right to draw as much water as they can from their property. Because both states draw water from some of the same underground sources, the issue has created some disputes between them.

At this point, the McCauleys are focusing on establishing the milking herd and are raising no calves on the farm.

"From a cash-flow standpoint, we need to get through the startup phase," Alan said. "I've got some reliable sources (for replacements and building the herd) right now."

Once the milking facilities are full, Alan said he might consider feeding replacement heifers.

The cows on the dairy have been averaging about 70 pounds of milk on twice-a-day milking, and "are very healthy and breeding back" with a cull rate between 15 and 20 percent, Sandy said. The low humidity and dry climate help make a good home for the cows.

"All in all, the cattle do very well," she said. "They are very, very comfortable."

While the corrals usually provide a dry, roomy area for the cows, they can also become a problem during wet periods, Alan noted.

"The weather drives me nuts," he said, remembering an earlier string of misty, foggy days that made the lots anything but dry.

On the other hand, the low cost and easy maintenance of an open corral system compared to a freestall barn make it one of the major benefits of dairying in New Mexico.

The McCauleys recently switched to milking three times a day, with the short-term goal of boosting production to 75 pounds per cow per day, Alan said. About 1,200 of the milking cows receive bST.

(Turn to Page 14)



**Freestall Cow Mattress System**  
Economical Alternative  
for Cow Comfort

"The Ultimate in  
Cow Comfort" Slabs



**URAP**



**Manger Liner... Milk House...**  
Plastics for bollings, walls, pen dividers,  
confinement interiors, truck liners,  
conveyors, appendages...1,000's of Uses!  
**The Right Plastic For YOUR Job!!**

**CONTINUOUS Rubber Flooring**

No Seams...	Single Piece Widths up to 88"
No Interlocks...	Single Piece Lengths to 500 ft.
No Problems!!!	Not Belting...

**"A Step in the Right Direction!"**

www.northernplastic.com    MasterCard