

With New Chief, Association Reports Turnaround

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keeping services prices down, Nunes said.

If the organization had continued to rely on the reserve fund, the monies would have been depleted by 2008, according to Nunes's figures.

Income in 2002 included a \$296,000 increase in registration payments, as well as revenues from blood-typing services, ear-tags, classifications, and a Michigan TB project.

Holstein USA has nearly reached its goal of signing up 400 members by the end of the year for its new Holstein Complete, a comprehensive service that includes registration, classification, production records, genetic reports, pedigrees, and sire selection in one package.

This year, Holstein USA also accelerated its push to have its national farm animal identification and records (National FAIR) system recognized and implemented as the national standard for quickly tracing livestock in the event of an animal health crisis.

Jodi Luttrup has joined the staff to manage the animal iden-

tification program, first developed by Holstein USA four years ago. She spoke about its progress at the Tuesday meeting.

Luttrup said Holstein USA is at work creating alliances with other livestock industry leaders and federal officials, with the goal of having National FAIR recognized by USDA as the animal identification standard for all species of livestock across the country.

"If an animal disease crisis hit our country tomorrow, you would be shut down," Luttrup said. The value of a unified system would be that any suspect animal could be tracked in a matter of hours, she pointed out, rather than the month or more it could take now.

Ensuring food safety is another major goal of the national ID system.

"A lot of other countries are ahead of us in animal ID," Luttrup said. "Consumers want to know where their food comes from."

FAIR uses both visible and radio-frequency identification eartags to identify livestock. Animal IDs, similar to human social security numbers, are entered

into a central database. Registered users are able to access the database.

Not only would the system allow rapid tracing when implemented nationally, Luttrup said it can also serve as an excellent management tool for dairy and other livestock producers. She reported some dairy farmers already using the tags to help with computerized recordkeeping on their farm.

Even though Holstein USA developed FAIR, other companies could vie for the technology and court the government for rights to distribute and market it, according to Dave Paddon, Hol-

stein USA regional representative from New York.

"There will be competitors," Paddon said.

While the USDA has provided grant money to Holstein USA for developing the ID system, Paddon said is a challenge getting it accepted as the standard for the various species of livestock. Half a dozen computers programmers are working to make it compatible across the board.

Vice president Nunes said Holstein USA is seeking counsel to protect their work in developing National FAIR while the struggle for USDA recognition continues.

"We're two years ahead of ev-

erybody else," Nunes said. "But as this thing drags on, that will change."

Among Luttrup's efforts to promote National FAIR, she produced a 12-minute video on it, including farmer testimonies on how FAIR has worked on their operation. FAIR was also instrumental this year in successfully tracing tuberculosis in Michigan dairy herds.

"What we've done in Michigan is biggest feather in our cap," Luttrup said.

For more information on National FAIR or other Holstein activities, call (800) 952-5200, ext. 4062.

Wayne County Herds Complete 76th Testing Year

HONESDALE (Wayne Co.) — The Wayne County affiliate of Pennsylvania DHIA (Dairy Herd Improvement Association)/Dairy One has completed its 76th year with 79 herds on official test (63 published and 16 non-published herds).

The Wayne County herds averaged 18,999 pounds of milk per cow, 699 pounds of butterfat,

3.68 percent butterfat, 587 pounds of protein per cow, 3.09 percent protein and a value of milk per cow at \$2,701.80. Total feed costs averaged \$1,140 per cow, and income over feed costs was \$1,561 per cow.

Awards for production of milk, butterfat and protein plus recognition for high quality milk and herd management were presented to the following producers for the testing year:

- High Herd For Milk Production: Eroh Dairy, Pleasant Mount, 27,462 pounds of milk per cow.

- High Herd for Butterfat Production: Rowe Brothers, Honesdale, 1,055 pounds of butterfat per cow.

- High Herd For Protein Production: Eroh Dairy, Pleasant Mount, 803 pounds of protein per cow.

- High Cow For Milk Production: Rowe Brothers, Honesdale, "Quarter" — 38,781 pounds of milk.

- High Cow For Butterfat Production: Rowe Brothers, Honesdale, "Esther" — 1,537 pounds of butterfat.

- High Cow For Protein Production: Jack and Ella Chyle, Pleasant Mount, "Vinnia" — 1,099 pounds of protein.

- High Lifetime Cow For Milk, Butterfat and Protein Production: (Based on cows removed from herds) — Kevin and Gerarda Burleigh, Pleasant Mount, "Bess" — 240,563 pounds of milk, 9,786 pounds of butterfat and 7,315 pounds of protein in 10 lactations.

- High Quality Milk Award: Chris Lantzsch, Honesdale, 101,000 (average cell count for testing year).

- Herd Management Awards: Rowe Brothers, Honesdale; Ryan C. Wilmarth, Lake Ariel; Eroh Dairy, Pleasant Mount; Highland Farm (Bill Bryant), Honesdale; John Wetmore, Honesdale; N. Gary Kravetsky, Thompson and Jack and Ella Chyle, Pleasant Mount.

- High Mixed Breed Herd For Milk, Butterfat and Protein Production: Al-mar Farm (Margaret Non), Honesdale — 20,678 pounds of milk per cow — 768 pounds of butterfat per cow — 672 pounds of protein per cow.

- High Protein Breed Herd For Milk, Butterfat and Protein Production: Chyle-Land Dairy (Jack and Ella Chyle) — 16,646 pounds of milk per cow, 754 pounds of butterfat per cow and 609 pounds of protein per cow.

Small Dairies Can Succeed Without Increasing Milk Sales

Bill Henning
Cornell University

Over the past few years, statements have been put forth in the dairy industry with words to this effect: 1) No business can survive without increasing sales each year; and 2) Growth should be at least 5 to 15 percent annually.

It is said that this increase in sales is necessary to cope with volatile market fluctuations and inflation. This presents a quandary for the dairy producers who are not interested in pushing their cows to higher production and/or milking more cows. How are they to maintain a viable business in light of these admonitions without jeopardizing their personal goals?

Let's first address the potential outcomes if every dairy producer were to follow the increased sales advice.

If all dairy producers were to increase milk output by an average of 10 percent annually there would be over 2.5 times as much milk on the market at the end of 10 years. It is doubtful that demand will grow by that magnitude. Given our present knowledge, this would result in a dramatic reduction in the farm gate milk price.

If one were to buy into the advice of increasing milk sales, the most likely approach would be to increase cow numbers. At the end of ten years, a 100-cow dairy would be milking 259 cows. There are still many dairies that don't even want to milk 100 cows let alone 259.

Given the limitations of land and markets, some other suggestions might be more appropriate for the long term viability of smaller farms.

Diversifying enterprises will do more to counter market fluctuations than increasing one's intensity in specialized production. If diversifying can be accomplished on the farm, this might be a good alternative. If resources do not allow onfarm diversification consider diversifying off the farm. There are places to invest off the farm that can involve no increase in labor and even little or no management.

A perusal of Cornell's Dairy Farm Business Summaries easily reveals numerous places on the typical dairy farm that

present opportunities to improve net return in an amount equal to or exceeding inflation. The increased return results through changes that increase efficiencies in crop and/or animal production. Assistance in identifying these opportunities can be available through consultants, agribusiness professionals, or Cooperative Extension. This does not necessarily require increased milk sales.

Beyond these two suggestions, Dr. Eddy LaDue of Cornell's Department of Applied Economics and Management recently authored 10 keys to financial success on small farms in the Oct. 10, 2002 issue of *Hoard's Dairyman*. In summary his 10 keys are:

1. Control machinery cost. This includes initial investment, maintenance, and operation.
2. Be entrepreneurial. Search for better markets and find better ways of getting things done.
3. Employ modern techniques.
4. Employ labor efficiently.
5. Shop for lower-cost inputs.
6. Use commercial lenders, not dealer credit unless unique circumstances warrant otherwise.
7. Keep records.
8. Change to improve. Take advantage of new technologies that fit your goals.
9. Maintain family support. Amidst all the work and projects, keep family goals in mind.
10. Enjoy farming.

Dr. LaDue's number 10 is particularly notable. For well over a century, there have been a few groups of people who have well established track records of operating small, family-based farms. These farms have been quite successful, while abstaining from any government subsidies. Very often, these people don't even claim economics as their primary reason for farming.

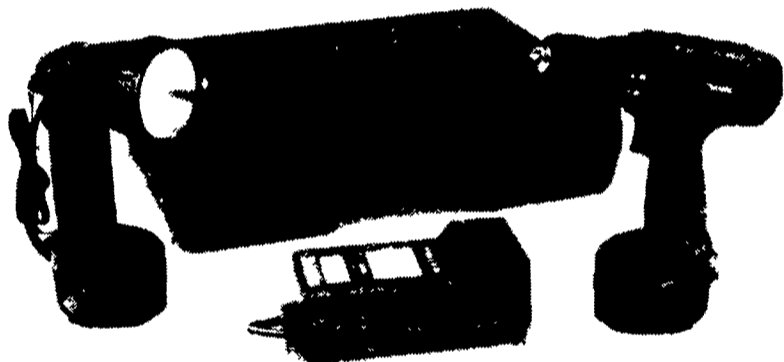
If you would like to learn more about these farmers and how they manage to stay both small and profitable, come to the Low Input Sustainable Farming Conference on Saturday, Jan. 11 in Jordan Hall at the Geneva Experiment Station. For a conference registration packet call Bill Henning at (315) 536-5123. Deadline for registration is Dec. 20.

Bill Henning is Small Farms Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension's NWNY Team and with Pro-Dairy. He can be reached at 315-536-5123. For more information about opportunities for small farms, visit the Cornell Small Farms Program web site at: www.smallfarms.cornell.edu.

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