

# Labor, Expansion

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Though the Hispanic population is a different culture than dairy producers can be used to, the workers are flexible enough to labor weekends and are scheduled time off sometimes during the regular workweek.

The language challenge proved interesting for the Brubakers. "My brother Tony took German and I learned Latin in high school," said Brubaker. "We had no background in Spanish."

To manage the large herd, bit by bit the Brubakers learned how to communicate. They also took a 13-week crash course in learning the language and culture from Penn State. Through the course, the dairymen learned basic language skills.

"With our broken Spanish and the Spanish guy's broken English, we got through," noted Brubaker. "It's not as much an obstacle as you might think."

He noted that he learned a lot from the dedicated workers.

Dan Hershberger and wife Gayle own Milky Springs Farm in Quarryville. The Hershbergers manage five full-time employees and two part-time.

Dan noted the farm also uses an Hispanic workforce and uses flexible scheduling.

Dave Zimmerman, who farms Meadow View Farms in Reinholds, along with wife Joyce and two sons, also uses hired workers, including school kids. The school kids milk three times per week. Five full-time workers are also employed.

Both Dan Hershberger and Mike Brubaker do not calculate man-hours in terms of milk production, but pounds of milk per vaker. The benchmark is about one million pounds per employee.

Dave Zimmerman uses a milk crew to milk the 600-some cows at 7 a.m. The school kids are employed for the 4 p.m. milking time.

One full-time person enjoys managing herd health and enjoys "putting in long days," he said.

The Hershbergers milk about 300 cows. At one point, before expansion, they were looking at an outdated freestall setup. "We asked ourselves, 'what are we doing this for?' We thought we should do it right or get out of (dairying)."

Hershberger noted the importance of looking for the right vendor for facility and herd expansion. "They want you to succeed, too," said Dan. If he were to do it all over again, Hershberger would fill the new barns "with all heifers, instead of a new herd of cows."

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