

Mother's Day Tribute Showcases Mother-Son Dairy Partnership

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for 73 head. But the cows had a hard time adapting to the switch.

Bonnie continued milking at home and for a neighboring dairy farmer. John started milking the cows on the herd that he and his mother owned in order to give his mom occasional time off to accompany Amber to shows, 4-H activities, and soccer games.

When an opportunity came up to rent smaller but more affordable facilities in Lititz, the Kisers took advantage of it. The barn has tunnel ventilation and mattresses, which have been great for cow comfort.

"I'd prefer to own my own farm, but it's pretty far out of reach at this point. This is a pretty good situation here and the cows are comfortable," John said.

The Kisers rent the barns, a little pasture, and half the house. Although the land is crop farmed by another farmer, John said that not farming the ground allows him to shop around to buy feed.

"When we first bought the cows, we used total mixed rations," John said. "Too many sales guys push their own products instead of recommending what is best for each cow."

The veterinarian used for herd health formulates rations, which John puts together.

Not growing the feed has its

benefits. "We can put our money into our cows instead of equipment," John said.

The cows have adjusted to the move really well and average 70 pounds plus per day per cow.

The Kisers said they are very attached to their cows and have cow "families" they continue to develop.

All three family members make pets of the cows. "We know them all by name. We know which ones like to have their heads scratched and like to lick us," Bonnie said.

"We cull out the low end. I pick out the bulls, and Mom does the breeding," John said.

Bonnie also does a lot of the herd's vet work.

"But I'm quick to ask advice," Bonnie said of calling a veterinarian. "We haven't had any displaced abdomens for two years. We avoid a lot of problems with herd health by really being picky about little things."

Bonnie also does the morning and evening milking on the farm and works full time as advisor. That requires her to complete the 5:30 a.m. milking before rushing off to her 8 a.m. job, then hurrying home to complete the evening milking.

"I think my mom works too hard, but she's the best person to do it. She's quick — nobody can do it as fast as she does. And

she's picky about prepping and milking the cows," John said.

Bonnie said, "I believe that a cow should be milked as soon as she is prepped, and that milking units should be removed as soon as a cow is finished to keep somatic cell counts low."

The Kisers also believe that it works best to have one person taking care of the daily milking.

"One person keeps things moving, and prevents mass confusion by having too many people standing around," he said.

The milk is shipped to Hershey's Chocolate via L.H. Burkhardt through Land O' Lakes.

John said that his sister is very helpful with the herd. Amber takes care of the calves, and her 4-H projects, sheep, heifers, and dairy beef steers. She is vice president of the Lancaster County Dairy Beef Club, was named 4-H showmanship champion and reserve junior champion at various fairs last year. She enjoys doing her own fitting for shows at Solanco, Lampeter, and Manheim.

Amber said, "Living on a farm has taught me responsibility. I learn at shows that if I do things right, it pays off, and that showing doesn't just mean walking an animal around in the show ring. It requires paper-work."

For her detailed record keeping, Amber received a 4-H award for completing one of the top five record books in the county.

"And I learned the price of feed," she said. That's a requirement for business savvy, she believes.

Amber is in eighth grade at Warwick Middle School, and plays soccer for Lititz. Next year, Amber will transfer to Manheim Central so she can participate in FFA.

"I want to be a large animal vet," Amber said. She served as a dairy darling for Lancaster County, and is considering becoming a dairy ambassador for the county dairy industry.

"My mom is really supportive. She takes me to shows, 4-H and FFA meetings, and soccer practices. She's always here for us," Amber said.

Her brother added, "I think my mom works too hard. I know she's really doing this for us."

The mother-son team has a 50-50 partnership on the cows.

"I never would have been able to borrow the money without her," John said.



Amber desires to be a large animal veterinarian, and finds raising and showing dairy animals a step in that direction. Here she shows Babe, a 1 1/2 year-old Ayrshire. Amber also owns Jersey and Holsteins.

The plan is that he will eventually assume full ownership.

John believes he has an advantage over most guys in partnership with their fathers. He said, "Fathers often own everything and aren't quick to hand over responsibility."

Bonnie said her contribution is worth it when she sees her children succeed. "The look on Amber's face in the show ring, and the satisfaction John has seeing the successful siring of cow families, is very rewarding."

Bonnie regrets that her parents (Daniel and Ruthetta Rohrbach) are deceased and unable to appreciate watching her son attain success in farming.

"Farming is something we enjoy, so it doesn't seem so much like work," she said. "If our children don't continue farming, what will the future hold?"

Bonnie wants to encourage her children to pursue farming if that is what they want to do.

"But I don't push it," she said.

Another daughter Lydia, 16, lives with her dad in York County. Lydia has shown sheep for 4-H projects.

In addition to their mom's hard work in the barn, her children claim, "Mom makes the best homemade pot pie." Here is the recipe:

CHICKEN POT-PIE

2 cups cooked chicken with broth

1 can chicken broth

1 cup flour (sifted)

1/4 teaspoon baking powder

1 egg

Milk (enough to make soft dough)

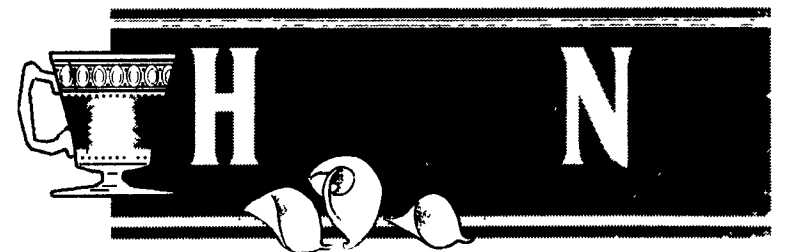
Mix flour, egg, baking powder, and milk to make dough. Roll out dough on a well-floured board and cut in squares. Put chicken and broth in kettle with 1 cup water. Bring to a boil and slowly add pot pie squares. Add salt and pepper to taste and more water if necessary. Potatoes may be added.



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John Kiser finds satisfaction in developing his favorite cow families in his and his mother's herd Mega Star Holsteins.



Eliminate Mosquito Hotels On The Farm

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Spring cleaning this year on your farm should include finding and draining potential mosquito breeding sites. This year, reducing mosquito numbers is essential as West Nile Virus is anticipated in all parts of Ohio this summer.

"Look around your farm for places where rain water can stand for more than three days," said William Saville, an Ohio State University Extension veterinarian. "A good place to start looking is back of the barn where old tires, discarded watering tanks, and other unused equipment is kept."

Anything that could hold water, such as wheelbarrows and buckets, should be drained and turned over to prevent from filling with rainwater. Tires should be discarded to prevent water from collecting, said Saville, an assistant professor with the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. Old tarps, feedbags, tin cans, bottles, or

anything else lying around should be picked up and thrown away if necessary. Watering tanks should be emptied once a week and kept free of algae.

Mosquitoes breed in shallow water that stands for more than three days. Low areas in driveways, barnyards, and pastures should be drained or filled with dirt or gravel.

Saville reminds farm owners to also look for mosquito breeding areas around the house. Roof gutters need to be cleaned and tight covers should be kept over cisterns, septic tanks, and rain barrels. The water in birdbaths and wading pools should be drained once a week. If there is a farm pond, keep the banks mowed and free of vegetation. A stocked fishpond, which is well managed for weeds and algae, will help reduce mosquitoes.