

Vale Wood Farm

(Continued from Page A23)

have people who can do several different jobs. That is what really makes it work.

"We may have somebody milking cows in the evening and then the next day they may be running a milk route."

With 18 years under his leadership, Bill said he is most proud of the family-operated business, because at the end of each day, the working family members are still good friends.

There are many issues facing today's milk producers, but none as important as milk pricing. According to Bill, his family has somewhat of a unique perspective on the entire dairy industry.

While many milk processors don't have a full understanding of the entire operation, Bill knows what it is all about from the cow to the final product.

"An extended period of low milk prices really affects the morale of the whole industry," he said. "I don't think most processors realize that low pricing has a long term affect on the supply."

"I can see within my limited scope that people are very anxious and have high anxiety on the processing side."

"Most milk dealers don't understand that lower prices aren't better."

Bill's daughter Carissa Itle Westrick is one of a newer generation of Itles working the family business. She said family members can be found on the farm and in the barn as well as in processing and even in the sales end of things.

Vale Wood Farms has a service area of approximately an hour radius within its location.

"We are concentrating on getting better at what we are doing," Carissa said.

Carissa did not just step into the family business without experience. She returned to the family farm after a stint in Washington, D.C. where she was on the staff of the National Milk Producers Federation. There she helped to develop policy for the business she grew up knowing dairy.

This smalltown girl had the opportunity to learn how the dairy industry works on the national level and the needs of milk producers throughout the nation.

Today, Carissa uses her big city experience on her family farm in rural Pennsylvania.

"I always knew I'd come back," she said. "We have a real sense of family and pride in our business. That's our driving force."

Pride gushes from every aspect of the business. Carissa is quick to point out Vale Wood Farms has earned the right to use the Free

Farmed logo on its products. The recognition is awarded by the American Human Association for the humane treatment of dairy herds.

In addition to the milk produced by their dairy cows, the Itles buy milk from four additional local farmers all within a mile or two of their farm.

Their product line includes whole milk, 1 and 2 percent milk, churned buttermilk, half and half cream, butter, sour cream, cottage cheese, 17 flavors of premium ice cream and an array of additional products.

Complementing their product line, Carissa said they are very committed to the home delivery aspect of their business.

"We have been servicing generations of home delivery customers. From parents to grandparents, we have delivered for decades."

Carissa said the home delivery service emphasizes their old fashion values and strong sense of tradition.

"We guaranteed a quality milk product from a family with generations in the industry," she said.

Strong family values translate into community commitment for the Itles. With this in mind, Vale Wood Farms welcomes over 1,500 school children annually as part of their school tour program.

"We are very proud of and dedicated to our local community," Carissa said.

COOL Meeting Scheduled For Lancaster

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — The last of USDA's 12 listening sessions regarding Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is scheduled for Thursday, June 26 from 1 to 4 p.m. in the auditorium of the Lancaster Farm and Home Center.

The Country of Origin Labeling law was included in the 2002 Farm Bill and officially starts on September 30, 2004.

During its current "voluntary" period, the COOL program is being presented in nationwide listening and education sessions, providing participants with an opportunity to make comments.

Listening sessions have been attracting standing-room-only crowds.

COOL supporters claim consumers want the labels and that

they will provide American products with an advantage. Opponents claim that COOL will require burdensome record keeping and increase production costs.

COOL will be enforced at the retail level because the law states that the labeling must be available at the point of sale where consumer purchasing decisions are made. However, the necessary paper trail will filter back through all segments of production and will involve livestock producers as well.

To carry the U.S. Country of Origin label, the meat product must have been born, raised, and slaughtered in the U.S. If any part of the process is conducted outside the U.S., the end product cannot carry the U.S. COOL label.

PLNA Plans Lunch With Pennsylvania Leaders

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association's first annual "Lunch with Pennsylvania Leaders" will bring industry and state government officials together to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing Pennsylvania's \$3.1 billion Green Industry.

Lunch panelists include Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff, House Agriculture Chairman Art

Hershey, and Senate Agriculture Chairman Mike Waugh.

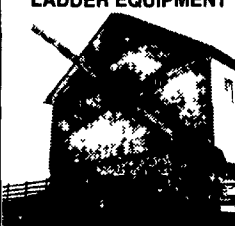
The lunch is planned for Wednesday, July 30 at the Fort Washington Expo Center in conjunction with the Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show, July 29-31.

The cost for the luncheon is \$15 for PLNA members and \$20 for non-members. For more information contact PLNA at (800) 898-3411.

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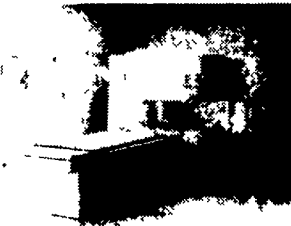
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