

# Milky Way Farm Survives In Suburbia

(Continued from Page 38)

difficulties can be remedied by phone conversations with a technician in Carlisle, according to Matthews, an electrical storm could wreak more than normal havoc.

As far as cow care, Matthews said he can keep up more with health concerns than he could prior to having the robot.

"Actually, I know more about the cows than I did before," Matthews said. He continues to monitor the cows every day as he feeds hay, and depends on a daily robot-generated computer printout for udder health data.

Before deciding to purchase the robotic milker, the Matthews visited the Cumberland County farm of Gordon and Amy Holl, one of the first dairies in the state to operate one.

He came home from the Holls convinced that his own farm should have one.

Paul Berdell, robotic milker technician from Wisconsin and longtime friend of the Matthews family, said the FDA recently approved the new technology for general use in the U.S. The number of robotic milkers is slowly increasing in dairy states across the country. A single unit costs about \$150,000 and

can handle about 60 cows.

While most of the milk from Milky Way Farm is shipped to Land O' Lakes, about 5 percent is used to make the ice cream that is sold off the farm.

Chester Springs Creamery opened in May 2001 and employs about 20 part-time workers.

The store features ice cream flavors named after the Matthews's cows. Favorites are Duchesses' Chocolate Supreme, Bessie's Black Raspberry, Joy's Peanut Butter Fudge, Blossom's Peanut Butter Pecan, and Polly's Pumpkin Pie.

Other public-friendly features on Milky Way Farm include many field trips for school kids and a pick-your-own pumpkin operation, both of which help draw plenty of customers for the ice cream store.

Matthews said the family maintains a good relationship with the public, who sometimes even wants to buy things the farm doesn't have.

"Somebody asked, 'why not grow Christmas trees? We'd buy them from you.'" Matthews said.

But by that time of the season it's time to take some rest, according to Matthews.

"These people around us have more money than we ever dreamed of and they're happy to spend it on a real farm," he said.

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