

Reid Dairy Farm: 2009 Progressive Dairy Producer

Maximizing opportunities best describes how Jim Reid approaches dairying. Over the past five years, the Reid Dairy Farm has nearly tripled in herd size and increased milk production by 6,267 pounds. As a result, the herd's dollar value increased \$1,020; earning Reid Dairy the NorthStar Cooperative Progressive Dairy Producer Award. Today the herd boasts a rolling herd average of 29,247M 1,288F and 880P.

Always a dairy farmer, Jim and his wife Pam moved to the Jeddo, Michigan dairy in 1978. "I came up to this farm looking to buy a grain dryer," Jim recalled. "Instead I ended up buying the whole place, cows and all. I jumped into the dairy business with both feet that day."

Equipped with a three-stall parlor Jim originally milked 50 cows, while holding a teaching job. One year later he expanded the parlor to six stalls; stopped teaching and began dairying full-time. From that time the dairy has slowly grown to the current set-up which includes a straight 17-stall Herringbone parlor, and a new 250-stall free-stall barn.

"It was a tough decision about what to do for the future," Jim said. "Two years ago dairying was strong and we decided to invest and get larger as my son Jeff was showing interest in the dairy."

With the expansion, the Reids now milk more than 200 cows three-times-a-day. Jim credits much of their production increases over the past five years to quality forages, good calf and heifer rearing, cow comfort, three-times-a-day milking and a young, healthy herd of cows.

The Reids feed a ration of high moisture and dry corn; along with beet pulp. "We pay very close attention to putting up quality feed," Jim commented. "We strive to get high yielding corn and we're also pleased with the quality of our forages."

"One of the factors that have played into our production increase is that the cows always have feed and water available to them," Jim said. "Even when cows wait in the holding area before and after milking."

Producing quality milk is a high priority for the Reid Dairy Farm. The herd consistently runs around 180,000 somatic cell count (SCC), earning them quality premiums. "We don't have a problem with mastitis now," Jim said. "It's better than it's ever been."

Jim credits sand bedding in the stalls as a key reason for their low SCC. Previously the stalls had mattresses and about five years ago the dairy was really struggling with mastitis. The Reids worked closely with MMPA and their veterinarian to solve the problem.

"We were having a terrible mastitis problem," Jim said. "We couldn't treat the problem. Our only course of action was to cull cows. At the same time the CWT was accepting bids and we decided to submit a bid. We were accepted and in the fall we removed the original herd and replenished the farm with healthy, mastitis-free cows."

DHI records and PCDART are used to help manage the herd. Various standard and custom DHI reports are posted in the parlor allowing everyone access to the status of all cows.

"We like PCDART because when Jean (Hart, DHI Technician) is done testing the information is uploaded to my computer and I can get any report I want. Several reports are posted in the parlor, that way when we are milking you can check and see what a cow's producing and if she seems off you can make a note of it," Jim said.

Bringing up healthy calves also plays a role in the production increases the farm has experienced. While the calf raising program has worked well for quite some time, recent changes were made for economic reasons.

"This summer we all (dairymen) had to figure out how to save a nickel here and there," Jim remarked. "We've always used a custom heifer raiser and we are very happy with the job they do. They do a great job growing them and getting them bred, but we decided to change our



Jim and Pam Reid and their son, Jeff.

strategy slightly so we could keep the calves home a little longer and save some money."

With the addition of a 33-pen Coverall building and the renovation of the bunker silo into heifer pens, animals are now able to stay at the dairy seven months longer. After birth, calves are moved to the Coverall building, where they stay for the first four months of age and remain on milk replacer the entire time.

At four months of age, calves are moved to the heifer barn where there are four pens allowing grouping by age and size. Heifers move to the heifer raiser's facility at about 12 months of age and return to Reid Dairy approximately two months prior to calving. Heifers are bred A.I. first and second service with *gender SELECTed*™ semen as the Reids are still trying to grow the herd.

"We've had excellent success with sexed semen," Jim noted. "Our conception rate is high and out of 50 calves we've only had one bull calf. The product is cost effective."

Future plans for Reid Dairy include maximizing opportunities and the facilities they have. "It will take about eight months to get the new barn full," Jim said. "We'll continue to use our DHI records to make culling decisions and maximize herd performance." ☆