

## Rosebrugh Dairy: 2011 Progressive Dairy Producer Winner

There is no 'I' in 'team' and there certainly isn't any 'I' at Rosebrugh Dairy. The winner of the 2011 Progressive Dairy Producer Award, Rosebrugh Dairy credits teamwork, communication and paying attention to what the cows want, as reasons for their success.

Over the past five years, the West Branch, Michigan dairy has increased production by nearly 6,000 pounds of milk and \$1,084 dollar value, while lowering their SCC by 40,000 points. Tony and Rebeka Rosebrugh, along with TJ Barton and Roy Smith are among the team members responsible for the farm's progress.

"Every management change we've made, we have done for the cows," noted Tony. "Our original goal with all these changes was to improve cow health. The extra milk is a bonus."

During the past two years, cow comfort at the dairy has received an overhaul to say the least. Buildings have been remodeled; long-day lighting has been added; fans, lots of them, have been installed; bunk space and water space have been expanded; and facilities have been built.

In the spring of 2010, the farm was struggling with fresh cow issues, and they decided to build a barn dedicated to the care and comfort of the 40 freshest cows. The Rosebrugh team agrees, "Almost immediately we saw improvements in cow health."

With the fresh cows in a new facility, it is now easier to keep a watchful eye on the group which allows for more regular monitoring. Cows are temperature checked and palpated three times a week in an effort to head-off a problem before it occurs.

Paying closer attention to how feed is harvested and delivered to the cows was another management area that went through improvements. "We are paying closer attention to bunk management," said TJ. "It used to be we didn't want any

feed left over in front of the cows, but now we want feed left to ensure the cows are able to eat anytime they want. We aren't as worried about wasting feed, as its part of the plan to feed the weigh-back to the heifers."

In February this past year, Rosebrugh Dairy implemented three-times-a-day milking with a goal of reducing SCC. "Going 3X was a huge help with reducing the herd's SCC," said TJ. "The production increase was an added bonus," Tony concurred.

While cow comfort improvements have had a significant impact on the herd's progress, the Rosebrugh team is anticipating even more advancements with the addition of A.I. to the herd. In April this past year, they began working with NorthStar reproduction specialists, Jim Morgan and Garrick Griffith, on implementing an A.I. program at the farm.

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"As we were working on improving the herd we knew including A.I. had to be a part of the progress," said Tony. "One of the things we are out to improve is to reduce calving difficulties. We also recognize the feed costs associated with keeping herd bulls and know if we get rid of a bull; it can be replaced by a profitable cow. Now that we've started using A.I. we won't go back."

The Rosebrugh herd has utilized DHI testing and PCDART for many years, most recently working with DHI Specialist, Audrey Daniels. PCDART is used to keep track of the reproduction



Roy Smith, Tony and Rebeka Rosebrugh, and TJ Barton.

data, as well as other vital information including the Ovsynch schedule, SCC, the cull list and more.

"We are a prime example of how you can always be on test, but don't get much out of the data that's provided," said Tony. "Now we are utilizing the data a lot more and it is really helping us progress." The Rosebrugh team agrees, "PCDART is amazing."

A lot of the progress at the dairy has been the result of improvements to cow comfort, but that's not the only key. Teamwork, a positive and progressive attitude by the entire team, and good communication has all been critical for progress.

"We have depth in our work force," noted Tony, "and that's helping us be progressive. No one can do it alone. We all have to work together."

Like the farm's team members, Tony notes that working with progressive service companies, not just sales people, is equally important. "Service people are really an extension of our farm team and we want to work with progressive companies," said Tony.

What does the future hold for Rosebrugh Dairy? More progress. "We are proud to receive this award, but it really comes down to having good people on our team," agreed Tony and Rebeka. "We are excited about the future." ★