

Reid Dairy: 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

Always a dairy farmer, Jim and his wife Pam moved to the Jeddo, Michigan dairy in 1978. A graduate of Michigan State University Jim had planned to follow in his father's footsteps by being a teacher and milking cows; but times changed.

"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 still continuing to teach. One year later he expanded the parlor to six stalls; stopped teaching and began dairying full-time. Since 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,

Pictured right: Jim and Pam Reid and their son, Jeff. Below: The Reids converted a bunker silo into a new heifer barn.

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. Inoculants are used on all the feeds to help maintain harvested yield and quality. High moisture corn is stored in the Harvester Silo, while the rest of the feed is stored in Ag Bags. Beet pulp is also stored in an Ag Bag and is considered a key ingredient for the dairy.

"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."



Jim's son Jeff is responsible for feeding and delivers four batches of feed daily, ensuring cows always have fresh feed in front of them. In addition, the Reids work closely with Steve Good, Vita Plus nutritionist, to keep the ration balanced and help the cows perform their best.

"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 they have fresh feed and water. They can always eat and drink."

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 the use of sand bedding in the stalls as a key reason for their low SCC. The farm previously had mattresses in the stalls 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, but it became clear there was no cure and the best decision was to aggressively cull cows.

"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



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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. The Reid Dairy heifer program works so well that in the past 12 months there has been a zero percent calf loss due to health issues. Additionally, the average age at calving for heifers is 22 – 23 months of age.

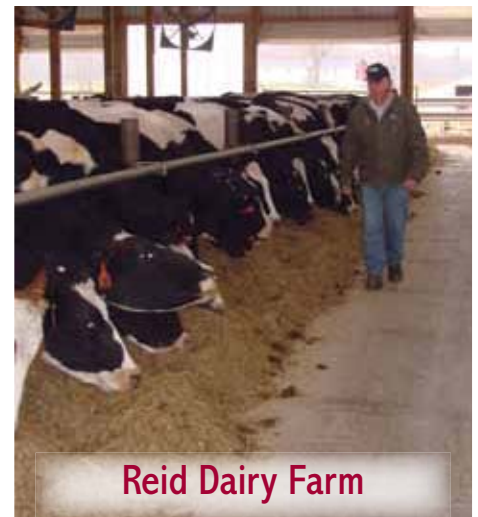
While the calf raising program has been working well for quite some time, recent changes were made for economic reasons. This past year a new Coverall calf

building was completed and a bunker silo was renovated into heifer pens.

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

With the addition of the Coverall building and the renovation of the bunker silo, calves are able to stay at Reid Dairy seven months longer. After birth, calves are moved to the 33-pen Coverall building, where they stay for the first three to four months of age.

Continued on page 25



Reid Dairy Farm

- Reid Dairy Farm, Jeddo, MI
- Owners: Jim and Pam Reid
- Employees: Three full-time
- Herd Size: 206 cows
- RHA: 29,249M 1,287F 878P (3X)
- Acres: 1,000

Reid Dairy: 2009 Progressive Dairy Producer

Continued from page 19

The well-lit barn provides a very healthy environment for calves. Calves are kept on milk replacer the entire time they are in the building. Grain and hay are introduced as soon as possible to get them accustomed to the ration that will be fed in the next building.

At four months of age, calves are moved to the heifer barn where there are four pens, allowing grouping by age and size. Heifers are moved 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."

Located in a heavily populated area, close to Lake Huron, the Reids decided to invest in creating a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) during the expansion process. In working with a certified CNMP planner, Reid Dairy has received approval of their plan and is in the process of applying for the Michigan Environmental Assurance Program (MEAP) verification. MEAP is a voluntary program that helps farms of all sizes and commodities prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks.

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," said Jim. "We'll continue to use our DHI records to make culling decisions and maximize herd performance."



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