



Producer Update

Cows Respond Quickly to Care in Special Needs Barn

At Sahrside Dairy near Briceyn, Minnesota, a specialized barn now makes it easier to care for cows during the weeks preceding and following calving. The facility also provides a clean, bright space for those that require attention for other reasons; cows with mastitis, sore legs, sore feet, and other conditions now receive treatment away from the herd, where they can receive the rest and attention necessary for a sound recovery.

Mark and Julie Sahr, owners of Sahrside, made plans for the barn when they designed their 500-cow facility three years ago. "The building was in the blueprints from the start," explains Mark, "because we knew we'd need it down the road. Those early plans made water hook-up and construction easy when we decided the time was right."

The Sahr's new facility has proven to be an asset, even in five short months. "Before we had this barn, we calved in a small room over there," Mark gestures. "As we used the freestall facility we learned that we needed more space for that purpose. Now that we have it, we see a marked improvement in our sick cows and a faster recovery after giving birth. We bring them in two weeks prior to calving, give them time to adjust, put them on a steam-up ration and

watch them carefully afterward. It really makes a difference."

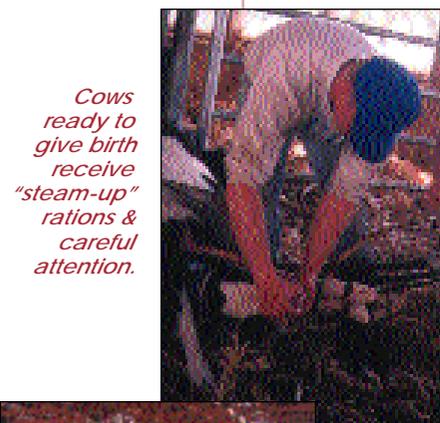
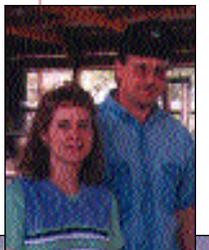
On this particular spring day three roomy stalls accommodate cows within a week or two of calving, a few ready to give birth immediately, and some that simply need rest and the watchful eye of the herd manager for a few days. The milking parlor is just down the hall, which Sahr says makes a significant difference. "The barn's location makes it easy for the milkers, and all of us, to regularly check the cows at night. Proximity to the parlor also seems to make a difference

because the cows don't have to walk far to be milked when they don't feel well. Before we had this barn they seemed to give up at a certain point, and just didn't want to get up to be milked. This new arrangement allows us to take better care of the cows, and no one is spread too thin."

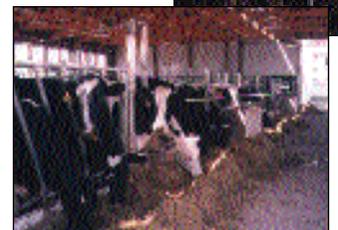
Temperature control plays an important role in recovery in the special needs barn. Ceiling and end walls are insulated and quilted air curtains cover open-air walls, helping to regulate air temperature in the colder months. The transparent curtains are securely anchored, allow light to enter, and keep out winter winds.



Mark & Julie Sahr, right, added a special needs barn (below, at right) to their dairy in January,



Cows ready to give birth receive "steam-up" rations & careful attention.



A light, domy interior and proximity to the milking parlor promote good herd health.



Employee Benefits Can Encourage Retention & Consistency in Dairies

When a dairy grows to require the help of employees, personnel management becomes an important concern. Dairy owners look for employees who are reliable, knowledgeable, and committed to their work. Employees, in turn, seek out positions that offer job satisfaction, a friendly workplace, and pay that reasonably rewards the effort put forth.

Bank on Success

Dairy owners often find it difficult to retain a consistent employee group because, more than ever, direct competition for employees exists between rural and metropolitan employers. A strong benefits package, which may include a 401K retirement plan, health insurance or profit sharing, can create competitive wage options.

A benefits package can...

- create greater loyalty and longevity;
- make dairy work a comparable option for earning a living;
- bring consistency to the operation;
- reduce owner health care costs.

When considering this option...

- do financial projections. Create a long-range plan if you don't already have one.
- determine the break-even point of the business and most- or least-likely income projections.
- identify the kind of plan you want, talk to providers, and make a careful choice.

Do you manage for optimum profits?

Look around for low feed prices. Ask questions. Evaluate costs per cow, per day/feed cost/cwt.

Minnesota	Spot Load	OND	NewCrop(10/98-9/99)
Cottonseed	\$182	\$165	\$170
Hay	\$100	(Relative feed value 150-160)	
Distillers	\$ 95		
Corn Gluten	\$ 65		
Corn	\$2.20/bushel		
Soy Meal 44%	\$147.50	\$150.50	\$149
Soy Meal HP	\$158.50	\$159.50	\$159

Feed for milk component value, not volume.

Work creatively with your nutritionist to match feed price and nutrient content with component value results.

Le Sueur Cheese Company, November 1997

Butterfat (Value on Surplus Fat)	\$0.142/point/cwt
Protein	\$0.37/point/cwt
Somatic Cell Count	\$0.069/cwt per 100,000 below standard of 350,000

Jerome Cheese Company, November 1997

Butterfat (Value on Surplus Fat)	\$0.167/point/cwt
Protein	\$0.390/point/cwt
Somatic Cell Count	Bonuses ranging from \$.04 to \$.45 per hundredweight are given for counts 0-500,000. \$.04-\$.45 is deducted for counts 601,000-1,000,000

Point= 1/10 of % (For example:3.2-3.1=1 point)

Note: Each dairy is individually evaluated. This is a simple overview of point value.

Working the Numbers

We believe the success of dairying depends on an awareness of the forces at work in the marketplace and our ability to take control

Producer Profile

For the Jerald and Lori Beckel family of Cleveland, Minnesota, farming is a family endeavor. The land they love and work near Le Sueur County's Lake Washington was owned for many years by Jerald's parents, Emmet and Loretta Beckel. The elder Beckels began shipping milk to the Saint Peter Creamery in 1945; the farm has sold milk to Davisco longer than any other milk producer.

Jerald and Lori began farming and started their family during the 1970's. They chose the work because they love its rhythms and wanted their children to experience the life they'd known growing up on Minnesota farms. In their minds, farming presented opportunities for shared work, extended projects, and a regular exchange of knowledge between parent and child.



L-R: Brian, Lori, Linnea, Andrew, and Jerald Beckel

*Beckeland Dairy
Madison Lake,
Minnesota*

Through the years, the Beckels have maintained a strong tradition of service, land stewardship and family commitment to the work of the farm. Their oldest daughter, Collette, shared milking responsibilities with Lori before leaving for Winona State University. Sons Brian and Andrew, both graduates of Southern Minnesota Technical College, now shoulder significant responsibility for the operation of the farm. The family's youngest daughter, Linnea, participates in 4H and shares in the work she's able to handle while a sophomore in high school.

As the Beckels increase their herd's production through strong genetics and carry out the daily work of the farm, they also weigh options presented to them by an industry influenced increasingly by economies of scale. "Brian and Andrew want to stay in farming, so we're seriously considering how this farm can support two to three families," explains Jerald. "Located, as we are, on a watershed that feeds into Lake Washington, we're concerned about the environmental impact of a lagoon and are carefully considering our options."