



Family dairy marks 10 years in Rexford

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For some of us, it might be a dream come true to live in rural Pennsylvania and see the Susquehanna River from your kitchen window — but not so if you're a dairy-farming family needing to expand.

That's a scene the Tom and Judy McCarty family was willing to give up when they discovered their sons wanted to carry on the family tradition in dairy farming.

The family had to expand to bring four sons into the operation, and space wasn't available in Pennsylvania. The winters were bad, and land to expand a dairy was practically nonexistent, Judy said.

The family had read about locations in Kansas in several dairy publications, and a friend of theirs who had been to the state encouraged them to investigate the opportunities here.

The youngest son, Tom, was in school at Kansas State University, and liked it, Judy McCarty said, so they came to northwest Kansas looking for an area with enough land to build, along with land to grow what they needed for their cows.

"On our first trip to Thomas County, we knew we had to be here," said Judy. "The weather is so much better here, we like the wide open spaces, and we really

like being able to see forever." "We had no qualm about coming here, so we sold the cows, the equipment, and the nonproductive land in Pennsylvania, and basically just started from scratch once we got here. That was 10 years ago, in 1999, and by April of 2000 we were milking."

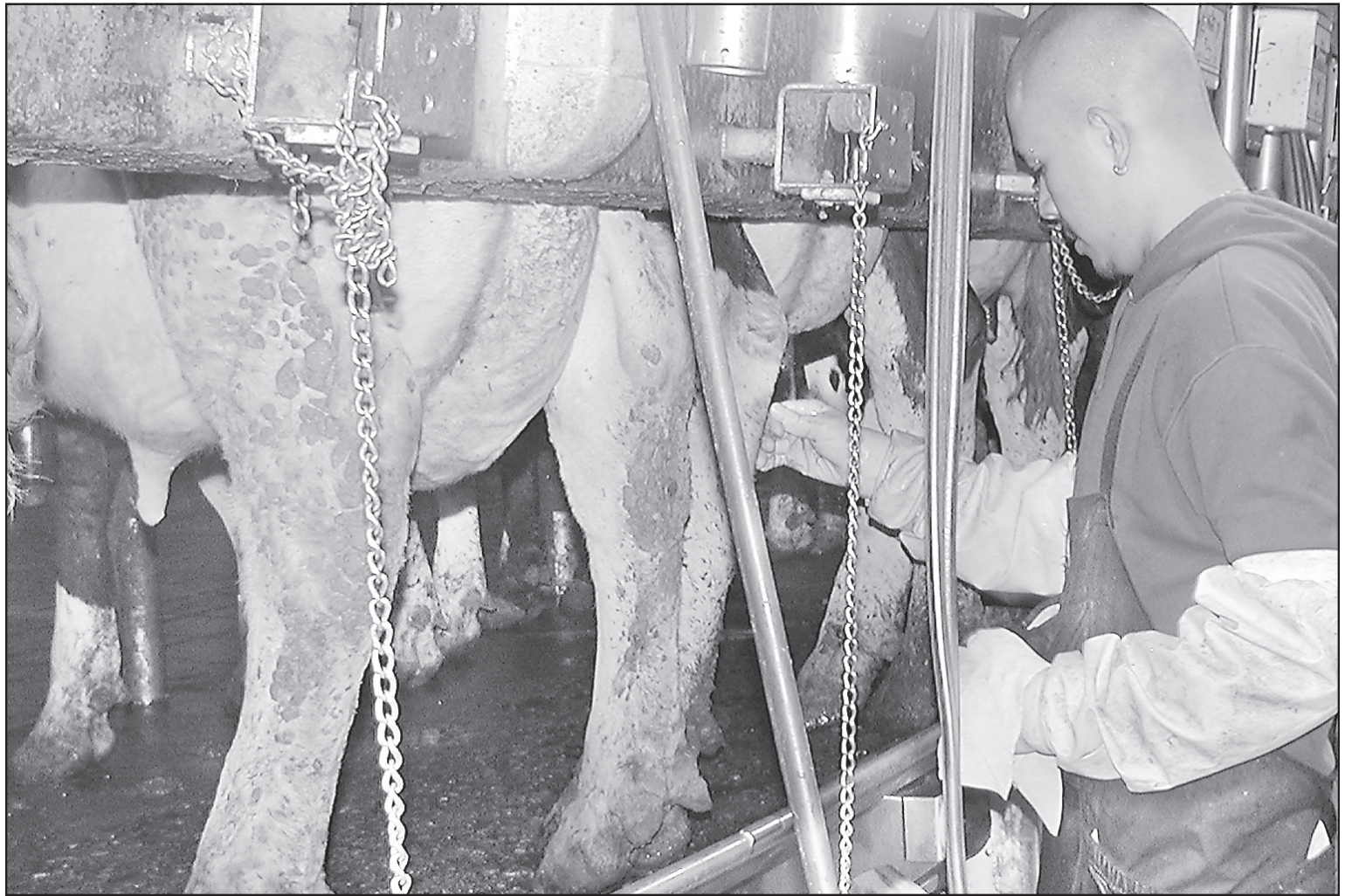
Today, sons Clay and Tom are at the Rexford dairy, Mike is at the newer Bird City location and David does consulting for dairies and manages a dairy in the Syracuse area.

Pennsylvania's loss was a welcome gain for northwest Kansas, bringing jobs and income to the area and students to the Golden Plains School District.

Pennsylvania has several milk-marketing cooperatives, she said, but here they are by default captives of the Dairy Farmers of America cooperative. Still, she said, Kansas has more opportunities for information and knowledge.

The McCartys, who milked about 150 cows back east, began their dairy just west of Rexford milking 750 cows. Today it has grown to 1,541, with 40 more to be added before the end of the year.

The milking schedule is three times a day, 50 cows at a time, Judy said. The milking parlor holds 25 cows on each side. The parlor floor is raised to make it easier on the workers, so that they don't have to bend over to clean



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Workers carefully and skillfully clean each cow that comes in to the milking parlor at the McCarty Dairy in eastern Thomas

County. The dairy has 1,541 cows in production and plans to add 40 more before the end of the year.

the udders and hook up the milkers.

The cows enter through a gate

into a walkway that leads them to the lock stanchions. They put their heads through the stanchions, which automatically snap shut. Three workers clean udders, spray them with disinfectant and hook up the milking machines.

When the milking is finished, the cows are each treated with teat-tip protection, the locks release and cows step to freedom, with 50 more right behind them. Like clockwork, it's clean, spray, strip, treat. The whole process, from the time the cows step through the gate, takes about 12 minutes. They can process five "turns" an hour, Clay McCarty said, equating to 250 cows an hour.

Why milk every eight hours? The production just seems to stay up better when they're milked every eight hours, Judy said.

Every morning at 6:30 and every evening at 6:30, the milking parlor and equipment is thoroughly washed and cleaned to be ready for the next shift to begin at 7.

Fifty cows create a lot of heat in the summer, so cool water misters are turned on to keep the cows comfortable in the enclosed barn.

Tanker trucks from the co-op come about every eight to 10 hours to pick up the milk from storage tanks, which can hold 7,000 gallons. Production records are kept on each cow, Judy said, and each one gets a health check once a month with the newest cutting-edge technology.

The family and crew of 20 employees do everything from artificial insemination to cesarean-section deliveries. Insemination is calculated to produce female calves to join the milking herd.

"We buy mostly gender semen," said Clay McCarty, son of Tom and Judy. "Because we're raising our own replacement heifers, we can justify to cost of the more expensive semen, because the pregnancies turn out to be around 90 percent heifer calves."

Over 450 calf huts house the ba-

bies from just days old to weaning at around eight weeks. The baby calves are fed milk from cows who are being treated with antibiotics, since it can't be saved and sold. The process equates to good economics, Judy said, saving the cost of commercial milk replacer.

Bull calves are fed colostrum for a couple of days and then are sold.

"Cows are generally kept through three or four lactations before they are replaced," Judy said, "but the first cow to freshen here just left us about a week ago. We had gotten rather attached to her."

Clay said building the heifer yard this year was a good thing, because right now they are raising replacement stock for the family's second dairy at Bird City, and have 3,100 head in the yard. But, he said, a lot of their success lies in good employees.

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Row upon row of baby calves wait to be transferred to the heifer yard at the McCarty Dairy near Rexford as a part of the replacement heifer program at the dairy. They will leave the calf huts when they reach 3 months old and are eating three to five pounds of grain a day.

Moore's departure leaves uncertain race

By John Milburn
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Whether he intended to or not, when Rep. Dennis Moore announced that he was retiring from Congress, he shook the Kansas political landscape for the next year.

Moore, the state's lone Democrat in Congress, announced he would not seek a seventh term representing the 3rd Congressional District in northeast Kansas.

His decision had a ripple effect, causing Democrats to look to their bench for a replacement who could fill his fiscal conservative, moderate shoes. It also gave Republicans who were considering a run at the nomination but were unsure if it was worth their time plenty of reason to reconsider.

And analysts say it may have given Republicans a reason to feel better about their chances come next November.

"The Democratic strategy was to put all

their eggs into one basket and focus on (GOP freshman Congresswoman) Lynn Jenkins and concentrate on helping Laura Kelly," said Tom Erickson of the National Republican Congressional Committee. "Now they have to start raising money for the 3rd."

Jenkins, the former state treasurer, won the 2nd District seat over Democrat Nancy Boyda last year. Jenkins faces her first re-election challenge from Kelly, a Democrat state senator from Topeka who joined the race this fall.

"I think the environment has shifted favorably toward Republicans," Erickson said.

Moore had served in Congress for 10 years, elected in 1998 when he knocked off incumbent Republican Vince Snowbarger. In each subsequent re-election, he's been able to build his margins against Republican challengers, including former Attorney General Phill Kline.

The district covers the Kansas City suburbs of Johnson and Wyandotte counties and the east part of Douglas County, including east Lawrence.

Gabby Adler of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said she doesn't think the party should fear losing the seat just yet. She notes that most analysts consider the district a "toss up" despite Republicans having an advantage in voter registration. Moore carried the race by 16 points in 2008, and it was the only district in Kansas that President Barack Obama won.

"This is the type of moderate suburban district that we have done well in," Adler said.

Even if Jenkins wins another term, there will be plenty of turnover in the Kansas delegation. Two Republican incumbents are giving up their seats to vie for the Senate vacancy left by Sam Brownback. He's retiring to run for governor and is considered the front-runner.

Rep. Jerry Moran, a Republican in the 1st District, and Rep. Todd Tiahrt, a Republican from the 4th District, are locked in a battle for the party's nomination. Moran's seat is con-

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Police searching for jail escapee

A prisoner from the Rawlins County jail escaped Monday while at the Colby Medical and Surgical Center on Range Avenue, near the Colby Middle and Grade schools.

Crystal Hatfield, charged with arson, apparently escaped about 11:45 a.m. while being escorted by a Rawlins County sheriff's deputy. Hatfield was wearing an orange shirt and jeans with holes in them, dispatchers said.

Colby Police joined the search, checking the area around the center. The schools were alerted, and officers walked

through the buildings, but the grade school office said students were not locked down.

Three teachers on playground duty reported they had not seen anything. Later, officers expanded the search, checking around Walmart, Colby Community College and highways out of town. At 1 p.m., the search continued and Hatfield was still at large.

According to the Rawlins County Square Deal, Hatfield, 24 at the time, allegedly set fire to a trailer owned by Zeb Ruda, who was not home, Aug. 27.

Briefly

Pizza Hut to help cancer patient

Colby Pizza Hut will hold a fund raiser for Bob and Pam Rundel from 5 to 8 p.m. Tuesday. Twenty percent of all money made during that time will be donated to the family to help with expenses from cancer treatments. For information, call Pizza Hut at 462-8206.

Get 'Booked,' lunch at library

The Pioneer Memorial Library will have a "Booked for Lunch" book review and meal at noon Wednesday. Darryl Henry will review "The First Billion is the Hardest: Reflections on a Life of Comebacks and America's Energy Future," by Texas oilman T. Boone Pickens. Lunch is free but donations will be accepted. For information, call the library at 460-4470.

School plans annual banquet

Heartland Christian School invites everyone to its annual Partners for the Future Endowment Banquet, "Continuing the Vision," at 6 p.m. Friday at the school. Tickets are \$15 and may be purchased from the school office at 460-6419 by Tuesday.

Pancake breakfast Saturday

The High Plains Lions Club will hold its annual Pancake Feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building. Proceeds will go to the club's community improvement program. Bring your old eye glasses and hearing aids so they can be recycled back into service, said club President Roger Hale. For information, call Hale at 462-1172.

Bible, lunch merge for Advent

The Thomas County Ministerial Association is

sponsoring "Advent Brown Bags and Bible" from noon to 12:50 p.m. Wednesdays in the Fellowship Hall of the Colby Presbyterian Church, 515 W. Fourth Street. The theme this year is "Joy to the World." Pastors who plan to speak are Carol Rahn (First Presbyterian) this week, Steve Todd (College Drive Assembly of God) Dec. 9, Jarrod Spencer (Church of Christ) Dec. 16 and Larry Booth Dec. 23. Everyone is welcome for fellowship, scripture, hymns and a brief Advent message. Bring a sack lunch; dessert and beverage will be provided. For information, call 462-6342.

College vocal concert Thursday

The Colby Community College instrumental music department's annual winter concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center on campus. The performance will include the jazz and concert bands, directed by Tony

Schroer. Everyone is invited to this free performance. For information, call college spokesperson Debbie Swanke at 460-5411.

Women's group plans fund raiser

The Colby Women's League will hold its 13th annual Christmas brunch from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday at Meadow Lake Golf Course and Restaurant. Donations will be accepted to benefit area groups and charities. For information, call Anita Hills at 462-6208.

