

***“Being MMPA’s top quality farm proves the Coppernolls are doing the right things at the right time and they are doing them consistently every day.” – Gary Trimner***

milking unit. Harry and Mike pay close attention to detail, using as much time as it takes to get the cows very clean. The cows are post-dipped with a one percent iodine solution before leaving the parlor.

“They aren’t the fastest milkers,” June says. “They take a few hours to milk the cows because they take their time to get the cows clean.”

The farm’s milking system is 40 years old and does not have a backflushing system so any questionable cows are milked last to reduce the spread of mastitis.

The Coppernoll’s keep the incidence of mastitis on the farm low by keeping their cows healthy. To reduce mastitis in the herd, they dry treat all heifers 30 days prior to freshening and dry treat all cows 60 and 30 days prior to freshening.

MMPA SCC reports are faxed to the Coppernolls twice a week, helping them keep close tabs on the herd’s SCC.

“If the SCC on the MMPA report gets anywhere close to 100,000, we really start watching the cows,” Harry says.

They also rely on monthly DHIA tests to determine problem cows. Cows with a high SCC are treated once and culled if they do not respond to treatment.

“We’ve been blessed with so many heifers, we are really lucky that we can cull pretty heavy,” Harry says. The farm currently has 100 heifers, ranging in age from calves to springers. “We have had a couple of months where we had 100 percent heifers.”

The Coppernolls maintain a closed herd and raise all of their own replacements on the farm. The occasional bull calves are sold as deacons.

“All of the cows are inseminated, we have never had a bull at this farm, only bull calves,” June says. “We don’t buy any animals – just the ones that come in a straw.”

Cows are bred at 60 days past freshening and are dried off 60 days prior to their due date. Harry synchronizes any cows he does not see coming into heat so they won’t freshen in the winter. Heifers are bred at 14-15 months so they can freshen at two years. Harry uses an implant to synchronize heifer breeding.

During the warmer months, dry cows and pregnant heifers are kept on a small pasture next to the Coppernolls’ house where they are fed a steam-up ration. The pasture’s close proximity to the house lets the family notice if any problems arise when the cows freshen.

“The cows freshen in the pasture,” Harry says. “It seems like the heifers can have calves by themselves out there. When we had them in the barn, they need more assistance than they do now.”

The milking herd is also kept on pasture when it is warm. The 14-acre pasture is adjacent to the freestall barn and feed bunk where they are fed a TMR year-round.

“The cows stay a lot cleaner out there on the pasture,” Harry says. “If it is warm and dry, we

put the gate across the freestall barn. When it rains, we open it up again and let them in.”

In a time of low milk prices, the Coppernolls say having quality milk has paid off for them through quality premiums. Harry estimates they receive between \$800 and \$1,000 extra in each milk check by meeting and exceeding MMPA’s quality premiums.

For those farms that would like to reap quality premiums but are still struggling to lower the SCC in their herds, Harry advises keeping everything, from the cow’s udders and the milking units to the freestalls, as clean as possible. He also recommends pre and post dipping udders with iodine in addition to never using water to wash the cows.

“Take the time to get the cows clean,” Harry says. “The cleaner the cows are before you attach the milkers, the lower the somatic cell count will be. A lot of high somatic cell counts come from subclinical mastitis or just not prepping those cows clean enough. Also, make sure to provide the cows with clean stalls and a clean environment. Just keep everything as clean as you can.”