



## Chuck & Janet White

take care of a Mycoplasma infection in some of their cows.

The Whites knew there

**D**istrict 7 OYDC Chuck and Janet White view milk quality as one of the most important factors when making management decisions as the sole proprietors of their Fowlerville area dairy farm. Having quality milk assures them the cows are healthy and adds extra money to their milk checks in the form of quality premiums.

With a herd SCC regularly averaging 125,000 or less, the Whites experience very few mastitis cases during a normal year. To keep everything in check, they send weekly bulk tank samples to the MMPA lab where they are tested for SCC, bacteria and components. They also DHIA test the entire 118-cow herd monthly.

"We run weekly MMPA specials to be sure we head-off any problems," Chuck says. "We do not want to wait until a milk check comes and find a surprise. Then it might be too late."

The Whites' commitment to consistently monitoring their herd's SCC and bacteria levels paid off this summer when they were able to quickly discover and

was a problem when the herd's SCC spiked over 225,000 and some cows came down with difficult mastitis cases.

"Our SCC got up to 300,000 in August," Janet says. "For us that's just horrible."

In assessing the problem, Chuck thought a few of the cows' symptoms suggested they had Mycoplasma. A family friend and dairy farmer had recently dealt with a Mycoplasma outbreak, so Chuck called him for advice. The Whites' were told to immediately send milk samples from suspect cows to Michigan State University for analysis.

While waiting for the test results, Chuck and Janet sanitized the milkers between every cow and milked any cows with mastitis last in the string to reduce the chance of spreading Mycoplasma to the rest of the herd.

"Mycoplasma is not a good thing," Chuck says. "Until we got the situation under control we sanitized the milkers between each cow. It took a long time to milk, but was worth it."

Test results revealed four positive cows, which were culled immediately. Chuck culled three additional suspected cows before their tests came back.

"We kept one cow with Mycoplasma who was giving 100 pounds a day, and always milked her last," Chuck says. "When she got mastitis for the second time, we got rid of her."

The Whites culled eight cows total due to the Mycoplasma outbreak. While Mycoplasma is a disease that many farms choose to manage, Chuck and Janet decided to attempt to eliminate it from the herd, even though that meant a production drop of over 25,000 pounds of milk for the next month. The Whites' decision was justified when the herd's SCC dropped by nearly 70,000 in just one month.

The Whites' every day attention to detail and commitment to healthy cows helped them fight off the Mycoplasma outbreak and earned them a MMPA Bronze Quality Award this year. As a policy, they milk any cows with mastitis last in the milking string and send bulk tank samples to MMPA for SCC, bacteria and component testing weekly. Cows are kept clean and freestalls are bedded

with sand. Barns and walkways are scraped at least twice daily.

"Keeping the cows clean is the single biggest key to keeping the herd's SCC low," Chuck says. "We also think scraping twice a day helps to keep hairy heel wart cases low. We have never used a footbath and hardly have any cases."

The Whites have maintained a closed herd for nearly thirty years, but space constraints require Chuck and Janet to use a custom heifer raiser nearby, where their cows do come into contact with heifers from other farms.

Heifers are raised on the White farm from birth to about 10 months, and then sent to the custom heifer raiser. The heifers are AI bred there and return to the White farm for freshening. Chuck and Janet AI breed all cows using aAa analysis for mating.

Dealing with Mycoplasma was difficult for the Whites, but a greater challenge the couple faces is urban sprawl. The farm is located in Livingston County, one of the fastest growing counties in Michigan, where new housing and industry seem to spring up on a daily basis. Although the farm's facilities are becoming outdated, the couple has been hesitant to update and rebuild due to the farm's location.

"Our facilities are antiquated," Chuck says. "When we priced building new facilities, we found we would need to expand the herd to pay for it."

Although hesitant to move from the farm he grew up on, Chuck and Janet have begun looking to other rural areas in the state where they could continue to dairy farm.

"Part of the drive to find another farm is that we are not sure we want to update the

current farm and put that amount of money into an area that is probably not going to support dairy in the future," Chuck says.

Chuck and Janet are looking for another farm to move their cows to, but have found very few dairy farms in good condition for sale in Michigan.

"We haven't found too many farms for sale," Chuck says. "Most of the farms we hear about are by word of mouth. We will keep looking at other places, and if the deal is right we will buy. But we will do what we have to do to get by here."

In the meantime, they have updated a few things on the current farm, like installing headlocks in the stanchion milking barn.

"The headlocks save time spent locking the cows up," Janet says. "The stanchions were 40 years old and falling apart. We tried to build a parlor, but it was too expensive."

The Whites' two children, Jason, 15 and Jordan, 14, help their parents on the farm. The family and the farm's two employees,



Don Jenks and Dave Roberts all milk the cows on a rotational basis.

"We rotate morning milkings so nobody gets burned out," Janet explains.

Having dependable employees gives Chuck and Janet the opportunity to spend some time off the farm, so they can take the kids on weekend trips every couple of months. It also allows them to be involved in the MMPA Livingston Charter Local where Janet serves as secretary/treasurer and Chuck serves as a delegate. Chuck is also vice president of the Livingston County Farm Bureau.



*The White family: Jason, Janet, Chuck and Jordan.*