



## Deanna Pleiman

The old saying, “When it rains, it pours,” describes the string of challenges MMPA District 10 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperator Deanna Pleiman and her family went through on their Prescott area dairy farm.

Deanna farms in a four-way partnership with her parents, Don and Ruth David and brother, Donnie. The family currently milks 90 cows and farms 300 acres.

About 8 years ago, the farm partners decided to improve their facility and add a new parlor. Soon after they began using the parlor, cows started becoming sick, some even dying.

“It started out with the heifers dying,” Deanna explains. “Then we started losing cows. It would always be a Displaced Abomasum, but each time we did a DA surgery, they would never respond.”

Over the summer, the farm lost 30 cows. The farm’s regular

veterinarian could not figure out what was wrong and chalked it up to a management problem, so the family asked another veterinarian at the same practice to give them a second opinion. When he autopsied one of the cows, the new veterinarian found blood in the intestines, which suggested a Clostridium problem.

“We were vaccinating for Clostridium, but it turns out we were vaccinating for the wrong one,” Deanna says. “We thought that we were vaccinating for everything that was needed. We didn’t know there was anything else.”

Once they had immunized the herd with a vaccine that covered all strains of Clostridium, cows and heifers stopped dying.

“We had just moved into the new parlor when we had the Clostridium problem,” Deanna says. “That put a strain on us financially. We were already paying for the parlor and then we started losing

cows. It was like lightning struck twice in the same spot.”

With the life-threatening diseases behind them, the farm partners felt it was time to concentrate on the herd’s somatic cell count which had gone up a lot higher than they wanted.

While the family knew it was only coincidence that the Clostridium problem happened around the same time as getting the new parlor, they couldn’t help but wonder if the new set up had anything to do with the elevated SCC.

A check of the milking system by the parlor equipment’s manufacturer as well as some checks by MMPA’s Tom Herremans and Gerry Volz showed the parlor was in good working condition, just as would be expected from a new parlor set up. Cows were (and still are) bedded with sand, pre and post dipped when milked and dry treated. The family even went as far as sanitizing the milkers after

milking each cow, but nothing seemed to make a dent in the herd's overall SCC.

Following the *Clostridium* incident, the family felt it was time to find a new veterinary practice. The new veterinarian suggested a different dry treatment. They began to notice a drop in SCC when a group of cows they had dry treated with the new antibiotic freshened.

"When those cows freshened we saw a dramatic drop in SCC," Deanna says. "We couldn't believe the difference. The cows are much healthier now."

Just as the family thought all of the herd health problems were behind them, they were hit with a third blow. This time it was Acidosis. The new veterinarian and the farm's hoof trimmer helped them discover the problem when they noticed the herd had an unusually high number of cases of foot rot and foot ulcers.

"When we found the cows had Acidosis, we changed their feed rations and it took quite a bit of time for their rumens to heal before they were completely healthy," Deanna says. "Most of the cows got better within a year, but some we had to sell."

Facing a large number of problems at the same time was stressful for the farm partners, but they kept the farm and family together by communicating with each other and openly discussing problems. They make it a point to make major decisions together and have informal management meetings during lunch and dinner.

"We have worked together for so long that we pretty much all get along," Deanna says. "Generally things run pretty smooth."

In the future, Deanna says the farm would like to see the herd size grow to 120-130 cows. The current facility could handle that many cows without many changes. "We have purchased a few cows, over the last few months but mostly want to expand the herd internally," Deanna says.

As a second-generation dairy farmer, Deanna plans to remain in the dairy business and hopes that someday, her farm-loving 4-year-old twin sons, Thomas and Timothy, will want to join the family operation.

"Even though we've been through these challenging times, the farm is still the best place for me to raise my family and earn a living," Deanna says. "When I watch my boys ride in the tractor with grandpa and see how they have the opportunity to learn about life on a farm, I think, 'that's what it is all about.'"

Deanna is a member of MMPA's Sunrise Local. In the summers, she is a dairy judge at several county fairs and helps local 4-Hers get their animals ready for the fair. Deanna is also a consultant for Mary Kay Cosmetics where she has received several awards.



*The Pleiman Family: Thomas, Deanna and Timothy.*