

U.K. Dairy Farmers Visit Michigan

A group of dairy farmers from the United Kingdom recently journeyed to Michigan where they attended the Great Lakes Dairy Conference, visited MMPA's Ovid plant and toured two MMPA member farms.

Independent Feeds representative Andrew Henderson, of Cheshire, England, organized the trip as a learning experience for the U.K. farmers.

"I want them to see ways you've improved your efficiencies, take the best of what they see here and put it into practice," Andrew says. "The biggest goal of all of this is to improve the profitability of our farmers."

Employee relations, maximizing rumen function and sharing new research and information were some of the areas the U.K. farmers paid close attention to.

"Your dry matter intakes are very good – you are very good at maximizing rumen function with rumen conditioners and silage additives. I think conditioning the rumen by helping the pH balance inside the rumen is something you've learned very



The U.K. dairy farmers found the MMPA Ovid plant very interesting.

quickly and very well. We're way behind you in working in that area."

The group enjoyed their tour of MMPA member Green Meadow Farms, and was impressed with the team approach the Green family takes with herd health, using input from the veterinarian, employees and nutritionists, something that is not a common practice in the U.K., according to Andrew.

"The thing that struck us was how happy everybody seemed to be in the environment they were working," Andrew says. "Something that impressed us all was the willingness to work together; from the veterinary side, the farmer himself and the workers within the farm; whether it is through the breeding side, the feeding side or the general farm management. There seems to be a willingness to work together."



The group of U.K. dairy farmers enjoyed their tours of MMPA farms. Top photo: Green Meadow Farms in Elsie. Bottom photo: MeadowMuth farms in Frankenmuth.

They also took note of how well employees are respected and treated at Green Meadows. "When you go into the farm, the first things you see are pictures all over the wall of the people that work in that business," Andrew says. "That tells you there is something very good about that. It's something that I think we in the U.K. can learn about for the future.

The group also enjoyed tours of the MMPA Ovid plant and MMPA member MeadowMuth Farm, in Frankenmuth, and learned more about the Michigan dairy industry at the GLDC.

Ray Brown, former U.K. National Dairy Farmer of the Year, milks 230 Holsteins on a 450-acre farm between Manchester and Crew England. A couple of the biggest differences he noticed between the U.K. and U.S. are: nearly all cows are pasture fed in the U.K. and the U.S. and state governments are more helpful to dairy farmers and accepting of cooperatives than England's government is.

"I was impressed and consider American farmers very lucky that the government backs them," Ray says. "Our government is not helpful to dairy farmers and has prevented us from creating strong cooperatives."