

The Next Generation

2008 MMPA District 11 OYDC Nico Eadie



A tradition of officially adding the next generation as farm partners at a relatively young age has served the Eadie family well—giving the younger generation real-life business experience and permitting the older generation time to pursue other interests.

Nico Eadie became a fourth generation full partner in E-D Farms in January, just a couple years after completing his bachelor's degree in Animal Science at Michigan State University. His father, Arden, became a partner in the family dairy at a young age, too, and felt the experience would also benefit Nico.

“My father let me take over management of the dairy cows when I was younger than Nico,” Arden says. “The partnership is a good way to transition to the next generation. He is working for himself and not me—that works out well.”

When Nico returned to the farm after college, Arden handed over the cow side of the operation. As herdsman, Nico manages all aspects of cow health, breeding and the employees milking the cows. He recently took over management of the feed rations—the last cow-related job he assumed from Arden.

“Since Nico had recently been through all of those classes in college, I felt he was ready to use and apply the skills he learned there,” Arden says. “As partners, it's important he gets to run his side of the operation.”

The father-son partnership works out so well, explain the Eadies, because both partners listen to each other's ideas and work together to solve problems.

“One of us will bring up a problem and we'll talk over different ideas and brainstorm,” Nico

says. “We ask each other’s opinions and generally come to a consensus on the best way to proceed. We have a good working relationship and both try to maintain that.”

Many farms encounter problems, but admitting the problem and coming to a family consensus on a solution can be a challenging task even for the best-run farms. As E-D Farms grew, a freestall barn was added to accommodate their growing herd. Despite their best efforts, the Eadies felt they had too many calves dying, and the farm had yet to improve the calf raising facilities. When it got to the point where they had to buy replacement heifers to make up for the calf loss, the pair sat down to find a solution to what was becoming an expensive problem.

“Sometimes you have to look at your weaknesses even when they are hard to admit,” Nico says. “That’s when we sat down, talked over our options and found a solution.”

The Eadies explored many options, and asked others in the industry for their advice, eventually deciding to have the calves custom raised. The calves leave the farm soon after birth and are raised by a custom calf raiser until they are two months old. The change has greatly reduced the farm’s calf loss.

“That was a difficult thing to do—ask somebody to pick up our calves and raise them for us,” Arden says. “It’s important to realize what your limitations are—deal with it and do something about it.”

By making Nico a full partner in the farm at such a young age, Arden feels his son will have a good handle on all aspects of the farm business—including the finances. When a meeting with the farm’s lender occurs, both partners attend, and both regularly discuss the farm’s bottom line.

Early on in the partnership, Nico was given the responsibility for purchasing the goods and supplies needed to keep his portion of the partnership—the cows—up and running. Arden says at first, Nico was a bit tenuous about selecting and purchasing semen and other cow supplies, but now is used to dealing with vendors and selecting quality products for the cows. If a mistake is made, the Eadies look at it as a learning experience.

“I’m not afraid to have any of my sons make mistakes,” Arden says. “If they make some mistake and it’s cost them a few dollars—a few of their dollars—they learn very quickly. We don’t dwell on things that have gone wrong in the past, we just move on.”

~ E-D Farms ~



Nico Eadie, herdsman and partner of E-D Farms looks over his cows.

One Thing that Makes a Difference on Our Farm is...

We work to foster a learning environment for everyone involved in the farm.

~ *MMPA Member of* ~
District 11

Muskegon local

~ *Herd size* ~
380 milking and dry

~ *Replacements* ~
250

~ *Acres Farmed* ~
1,200

~ *Milking Set-Up* ~
15 stall Trigon parlor

~ *Ag and Dairy Involvement* ~

Nico is actively involved in Muskegon County Farm Bureau’s Young Farmer program, and will compete in Michigan Farm Bureau’s state-level Young Farmer Discussion Meet Dec. 3, during the organization’s annual meeting in Grand Rapids.