



Jim and Pam Reid, owners of Reid Dairy Farm in Jeddo.

**Reid Dairy
Farm**

**2009 NorthStar
Cooperative DHI Services
Progressive Dairy**

An initial goal of reducing Somatic Cell Count (SCC) and improving overall cow health sparked a number of improvements at Reid Dairy Farm in Jeddo. As a result, the cows are healthier and producing more milk, while the farm earned the 2009 NorthStar Cooperative DHI Services Progressive Dairy Producer Award.

“The award was for improvement over five years,” explains Jim Reid, who owns the farm with his wife, Pam. “Five years ago we were milking the cows twice a day in an older facility, struggling with high SCC and health issues.”

Back then, the Reids were not happy with what was happening in the herd, so they decided to make several management changes, starting with switching from mattresses to sand bedding and milking the cows three times per day. Taking out the mattresses was a big job, which included jackhammering out the concrete where the mattresses were placed. Once that was complete, sand was brought in making what Jim says was the most positive impact on the herd’s SCC.

“The sand bedding really corrected our SCC problems,” Jim says. “Within a few months we saw an improvement in both SCC and legs because the cows were laying down more to rest.”

Even with the new changes, the herd continued to struggle with mastitis. Jim worked closely with MMPA’s Mastitis Management Team and his veterinarian to solve the issue by culling several cows. Consequently, Cooperatives Working Together happened to be running

a herd retirement program around the same time, giving the Reids a unique opportunity to repopulate their entire lactating herd, and virtually eliminate the mastitis problem.

“Part of the reason for our herd’s improvement is due to the fact we have a young herd,” Jim says. “My oldest cow is in her fourth or fifth lactation.”

With the new young herd and sand bedding, mastitis cases are very low, and the herd’s SCC continues to run a consistent 150,000 to 180,000. Jim credits three times a day milking and good nutrition to an impressive increase of 6,267 pounds of milk to the rolling herd average over the past five years. Today, the rolling herd average is 29,247 pounds of milk.

Jim breeds the cows for components—butterfat and protein. He credits the breeding and a good balance of high quality feed rations for increasing the herd’s butterfat to its present 1,288 and protein to 880.

“We place an emphasis on having quality feed and keeping it that way,” Jim says. “We like the ag bag system because it is so flexible and creates very little feed waste. The feed has very little exposure to the elements or birds and always stays fresh.”

Today, the Reids milk 170 cows three times per day in a 17 herringbone single-sided parlor, which has been added on to and redesigned twice since the Reids first purchased the farm in 1978. The setup is a bit unusual, but works well, says Jim, who is satisfied with the current parlor throughput of 15 minutes per change with two people milking.

Employees milking the cows are sent to MMPA's Milker Training Schools almost every year. What made the biggest difference to the farm's milking routine was when Jim attended one of the schools. He says the employees wanted to use techniques he wasn't sure about until he attended the school and understood the reason for doing so.

"The owners really need to attend these schools so they can see what is being taught," Jim says. "An owner may not be open to some of the techniques if he hasn't been to the school."

Jim, who is also MMPA's District 7 board member, makes sure to discuss the importance of attending an MMPA Milker Training School to MMPA members whenever he attends local meetings in his district.

The Reids also emphasize the importance of having an environmentally friendly farm, and theirs has recently been verified in three Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program systems: Livestock, Cropping and Farmstead.

When the farm needed an additional lagoon, Jim worked through EQIP to fund the project. Before the farm was able to get the funding, a CNMP had to be completed to identify any weakness on the farm regarding the control of nutrients. When the CNMP was completed, the Reids obtained funding for a 5 million gallon lagoon.

"Once you've completed a CNMP, there's not much more you have to do to get verified in the MAEAP Livestock System," Jim says. "Once that project was completed, we had all the nutrient records, so we worked on the Cropping and then Farmstead Systems."

With the updates to the barns, parlor and manure handling system, the farm has the capacity to handle between 200-220 milk cows. Jim hopes to be at that level by the end of 2010, given the number of heifers that are freshening this year.

The Reid's milk cows are housed in an open air freestall barn and bedded with sand.

