

Dairyman

APRIL 2014



RISING FROM THE ASHES



SVF Financial Update

by Don Boelens

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Swiss Valley Farms
Cooperative

P.O. Box 4493
 Davenport, IA 52808

563.468.6600 FAX 563.468.6616
 www.swissvalley.com

Nancy Feeney
 Editor/ Member Relations Mgr.

Swiss Valley Farms, Co. will produce, distribute and sell value-added, quality products for our:

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The current fiscal year for the co-op is shaping up nicely. I am very happy to report that Swiss Valley Farms is solidly in a profit zone with all of our plants performing admirably this year.

Luana, in particular, is rolling along with a strong profit and no major production problems. Demand abroad for the cream cheese made there is fueling these profits. In fact, cream cheese export potential is so strong that the co-op's Board of Directors just approved a retooling of the cream cheese area that will dramatically increase capacity. What is even better news, a major customer has already signed on to purchase the increased cream cheese production. That's what I call a 'win-win.'

Our dried whey sales out of Luana also continue to boom along. To increase volume as well as create greater efficiencies in our drying operation, we have plans to condense whey at our White Hill Cheese joint venture and transport it to Luana for drying. Whey sales in Asia are still strong as much of it is used to produce baby formula.

Since the co-op's \$2.2 million profit last year was mainly generated by non-patronage milk used at the Rochester Cheese plant in Spring Valley, there was no patronage payout to co-op



CEO Don Boelens

members for the past fiscal year. To help solve this dilemma in the future, the Management Team has created methods to put more cheese made from co-op members' milk into the Club cheese production, which was recently moved to our new cheese plant in Rochester, Minn. Lower grades of Swiss cheese are being shipped from our Luana, Iowa cheese plant to Rochester to be included in the Club cheese mixture. It is also not out of the realm of possibility that some co-op members' milk can be used to make barrel Cheddar at another plant, which is then shipped to Rochester.

Swiss Valley's Cheeses Get Attention

Spring has sprung and so too have our brands. In fact, the Swiss Valley Farms and Caves of Faribault brands are popping up a lot of places this Spring. Our Jeff's Select and St. Pete's Blue cheese were featured at the Cincinnati Wine Fest by Murray's Cheese, which is considered one of the best cheese retailers in the United States.

During the coming months, Swiss Valley's cheeses will be on display at industry receptions, tradeshows and consumer-facing festivals and events across the Midwest, East Coast and even internationally.

Check out this list of where we've recently been and where we are headed this season.

- *Minnesota Food & Wine (March 1 – 2), Minneapolis, MN
- *Cincinnati Wine Festival (March 6-8), Cincinnati, OH
- *Ballet Quad Cities TuTu Fabulous Wine Tasting (March 7th), Davenport, IA
- *First Source Specialty Cheese Event (March 26 – 28), Coral Springs, FL
- *New York IFT Supplier's Night (April 2nd), Somerset, NJ
- *ADPI Industry Reception (April 29th), Chicago, IL
- *Great Lakes IFT Supplier's Night (April 30th), Battle Creek, MI
- *Seoul Food Show (May 13-16), Goyang, Korea
- *Minnesota Cheese Fest (May 18th), Minneapolis, MN
- *Lake Erie IFT Supplier's Night (May 20th), Solon, OH



World Championship Cheese Results

At this year's **2014 World Championship Cheese Contest**, Swiss Valley Farms/Caves of Faribault has taken home 4 awards.

St. Pete's Select from the Caves of Faribault took 2nd Place in the Blue-Veined category with a score of 98.95! Mindoro also received 4th Place in this category for its entry of organic blue cheese it produces for one of our private label customers.

Swiss Valley Farms **Cream Cheese** made in Luana landed a 3rd Place finish in the Spreadable Cheeses category with score of 99.10!

Finally, **Mindoro Gorg** received 5th place in the Gorgonzola category with a score of 97.85!

Congratulations to these plants!



Parlor Fire Can't Stop McComish Family

by Nancy Feeney

One thing is for sure -- this has been a really tough winter for every dairy producer in the Midwest. Just imagine how much worse these long, cold months were for the McComish family of Shullsburg, Wis. Before they even experienced the bitter temperatures and the piles and piles of never ending snow, a mid-September fire leveled their milking parlor, leaving them with nowhere to milk their 200 cows and a major construction project that couldn't be completed quickly enough. It was all downhill from there.

Tim and Kim McComish and their son Joe and daughter-in-law Amber operate the 200-cow family dairy where they milk three times a day. It was at the end of the mid-afternoon milking when flames were spotted in the parlor. Tim and an employee quickly got the last few cows out of the parlor. The fire department quickly arrived, but it only took minutes for the fire to destroy the 60-year-old gambrel-roofed milking parlor.

As soon as the clouds of black smoke billowed into the fall sky, the farmyard was full of neighbors who had

(ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PG. 6)



ON THE COVER: Joe and Amber McComish stand in their new milking parlor on their Shullsburg, Wis. dairy. **Above:** Tim McComish stands in the back holding pen of the new milking parlor, which replaces the old parlor that burned last fall.

On left: Joe snapped a cell phone photo of the burning barn while firefighters fought the blaze.



Middle: Joe salvaged the fire-damaged family farm sign and hung it in the new parlor.

Bottom: Swiss Valley Director Don Berlage, left, delivered a Member Security check to Joe and Amber McComish to cover the cost of the lost milk production due to the fire.



Member Security -- The Unsung Hero of Co-op Benefits

The Member Security Program is an exciting Swiss Valley Farms member benefit that frequently doesn't receive the praise it deserves. The program was developed over 50 years ago by the co-op's Board of Directors and was designed to help protect co-op members' milk check income under certain hardship conditions. Since then, it has helped hundreds of members.

According to an article in the August, 1962 *Mississippi Valley Dairyman*, "The Board reasoned that farmers usually help one another in the neighborhood when hardship strikes and felt our cooperative can do this on a larger basis through this program for its members."

Claims can be approved only by the Board of Directors at their monthly meetings and the claim must be recommended by the director in the district where the loss occurred. Members who feel they have a claim should contact their field representative who will help with the paper work and getting the claim filed. Some of the losses covered include:

1. Fire, flood or windstorm damage to barn and/or milk house.
2. Lightning loss of three or more producing cows.
3. Milk that must be dumped because it cannot be picked up due to snow-clogged, impassable roads.
4. Power failure at farm service entrance resulting in milk marketing loss.
5. Bovine tuberculosis loss of three or more producing cows.

Talk to your Swiss Valley Farms Field Representative for complete details on what is covered, information on filing claims and payment calculation. You can also log in to the producer-only section of swissvalley.com to see more details.



McComish Fire _____ Cont. from Pg. 4

come to help and it seemed everyone brought a cattle trailer. While the parlor was still in flames, the immediate concern focused on where the cows would be milked that evening. A plan was quickly devised. A group of 110 high-producing cows was driven 50 miles north to Fennimore, Wis. to the Lonnie Holthaus dairy, where a 120-stall addition to the barn had just been completed, but no additional cows had moved in as of yet. A group of 50 lower-producing cows were mixed into Dean Paulson's herd in Belmont, Wis. The remaining cows were taken a mile down the road to Clark Scott's dairy.

Once the cows were safely settled into new homes, it became obvious that this was just the beginning of a long, cold winter that would be full of miles and miles of driving, employee shuffling and endless construction decisions.

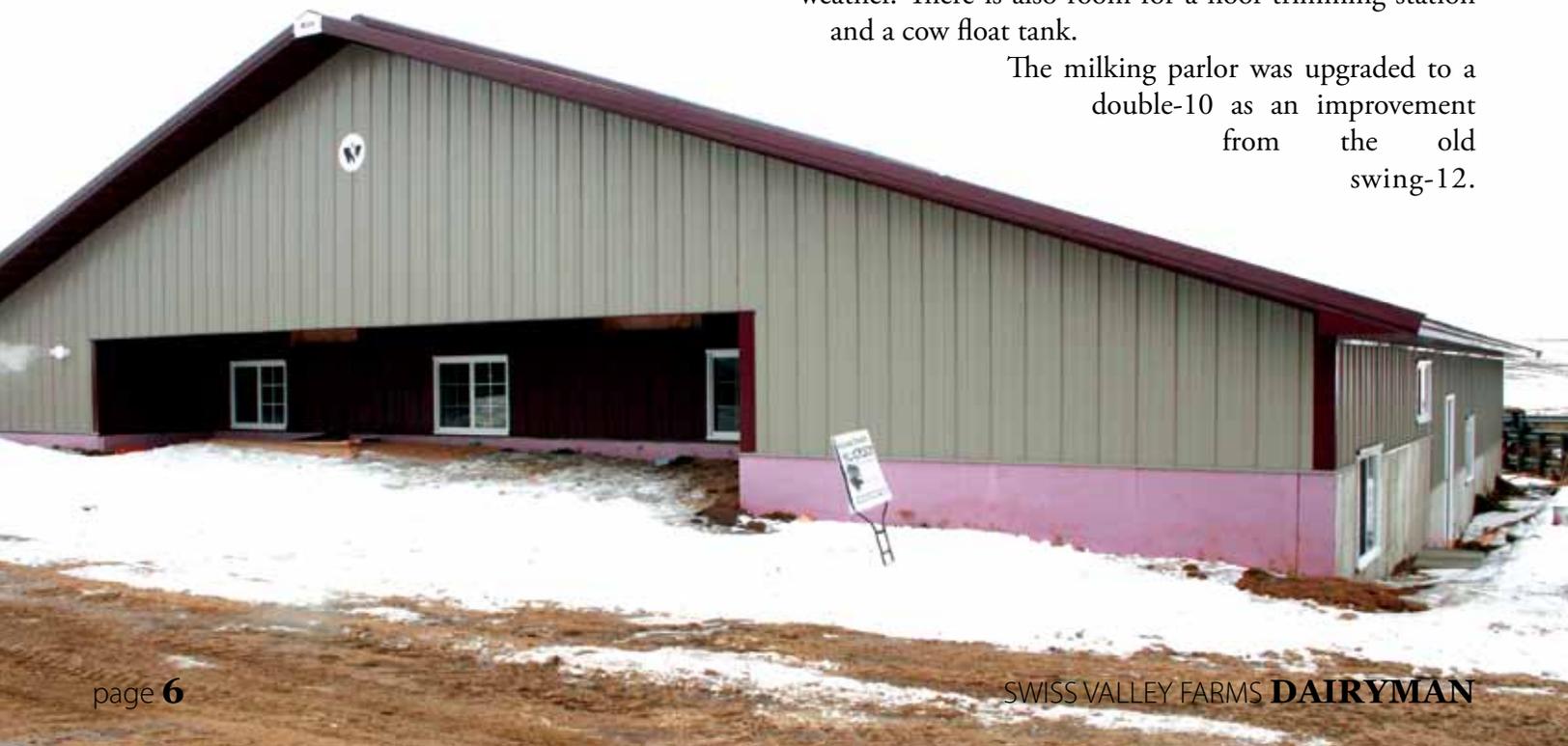
Throughout the snowy winter, two of McComish's employees, Tomas and Francisco Alonso, took turns driving to

Fennimore and working in two-day shifts, six days a week to milk cows on the Holthaus dairy. Likewise, Joe drove a semi load of his farm's total mixed rations to the Fennimore farm every other day. Amber drove there twice a week for cow health and vet checks.

With winter rapidly approaching, the decision "to build or not to build" was a tough one for the family to make, but this needed to be settled quickly so construction could get underway. Tim says the family discussed selling the herd and raising heifers for other dairy producers. However, Joe was of a different mind. Over the past decade, he had been buying cows and now owned half the herd. He was eager to rebuild the parlor and get all the cows back on the home farm.

Excavation for the 68-by-114-foot structure began Oct. 22. This new parlor would be twice as big as the old one, and would give the family more office space and a larger utility room. A restroom and lounge area were added, which Tim says could also be used when employees needed to spend the night during bad winter weather. There is also room for a hoof trimming station and a cow float tank.

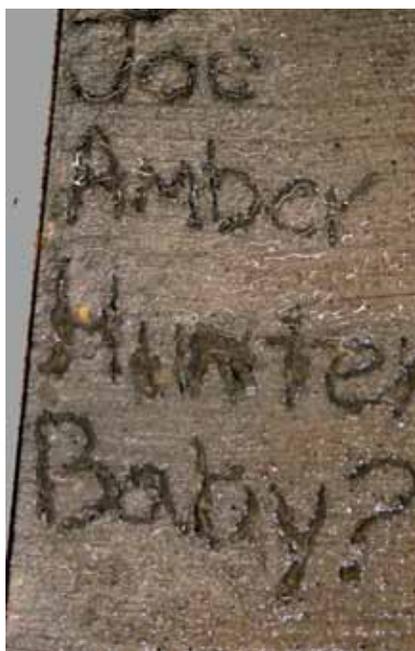
The milking parlor was upgraded to a double-10 as an improvement from the old swing-12.



The new facility has automatic takeoffs and CIP equipment. It is a low-line parlor, which Tim says needs less vacuum and will be easier on the cows, possibly increasing their milk production.

After one cold winter construction job, the new parlor was pronounced open for business on February 1. It was a happy day for cows, and the McComish's, when the herd returned to the farm. All in all, the cows handled the over five-month disruption fairly well. Before the fire, Tim says his top milking group averaged just 90 pounds of milk a day. After the fire and the trauma of being moved to another farm, their production dropped about 10 pounds a day.

Since returning to the home farm, the cows have settled into the new milking parlor and are slowly rebuilding their daily milk production. The McComish's



Above: Amber used wet cement to share happy family news with Joe.

At left: The new milking parlor features a double-10, improved ventilation and more storage and employee comforts.

were pleased last month when their local co-op director, Don Berlage, personally delivered a Swiss Valley Farms Member Security Program check to them. This co-op check reimbursed the McComish's for the dairy's lost milk production due to the fire and the cows' abrupt relocation. This benefit is available for free to all Swiss Valley Farms members.

It was a cold and

blustery day in mid-March and electricians were still on site scampering about the parlor, climbing up and down ladders tweaking the power connections to the new ventilation systems.

There are still small piles of construction materials scattered about outside the new building. A fresh load of gravel was recently dumped in the drive leading down to the new parlor, getting ready for the coming snow melt and what promises to be a very muddy spring. There will be time enough later on this summer for final clean up and landscaping.

While Tim and Kim were relieved that no workers or cows were injured in the fire, the couple still grieves over the loss of their milking parlor. It was in this parlor they had shared so many good memories raising their two children, Joe and Erica, and tending to their cows. But it is the way of life and the healing process that in the midst of building this new parlor, another special memory was made.

Joe and Amber are the parents of a one-year-old son, Hunter. In November, workers were pouring cement in the new parlor. Amber took advantage of this to share some big news with her husband. She carefully wrote each of their names in the wet cement by the parlor steps. "Joe, Amber, Hunter, Baby?" She then called Joe over to view her work. This was her way of sharing the news with him that another baby was on the way.

This young Wisconsin dairy couple will be tending their cows and raising their children inside this new milking parlor. As a reminder of what went before, Joe took the family's blackened and smoke-stained metal Swiss Valley farm sign that he had salvaged from the fire and hung it high on the wall of the new utility room. Tim asked his son why he hadn't cleaned the sign up before hanging it. Joe said he wanted it displayed the way it was so everyone would remember what happened.



YC'ers Swing into Spring Conference

Even though the weather was a far cry from spring like, YC'ers were eager to get on the bus Feb. 28th and kick off their two-day YC Spring Break conference, which was held this year in Dubuque, Iowa.

The conference began with a tour of the White Hill Cheese plant in Shullsburg, Wis. This is the cheese plant and warehouse that Swiss Valley Farms owns and is the co-op's contribution to the joint venture with Emmi Roth Kase. Small wheels of Baby Swiss are made here and Swiss Valley supplies all of the milk to the plant. Plant manager Walter Weber and cheesemaker Jim Klein divided the group and led them on an extensive and highly informative tour of the plant.

After that, YC'ers travelled to S & S Farms in Lancaster, Wis. where they were greeted by Pat and Karen Schroeder, their son Patrick Ryan, daughter Steffannie and her fiancée, Adam Mossner, who are all a part of the operation. The Schroeder's recently completed an extensive building project. They went from milking 180 cows in a 60-cow stanchion barn with a pipeline system, to a new 70-by-50-foot, double-12 GEA parallel parlor with rapid exits that is attached to a new 102-by-330-foot freestall barn. The building has stalls for 240 head, and lock-ups for 288. Pat's goal is to increase his herd to 260 cows.

Even though it was bitter cold outside, YC'ers enjoyed walking through the buildings, examining the new construction

and meeting some of the Schroeder's valued employees.

The next day, YC'ers got down to serious business indoors with a day filled with informative speakers. Carrie Mess from Watertown, Wis., is better known by her internet blog name of 'Dairy Carrie.' She told the YC'ers how her blog gained momentum on the internet and how advocating for agriculture is an important task for every dairy producer. (See more on Carrie Mess on the next page.)

A workshop on Financial Benchmarking was presented by Dr. Kevin Bernhardt, professor of Agribusiness at UW-Platteville, UW-Extension farm management specialist, and director of the Pioneer Academic Center for Community Engagement (PACCE).

Dr. Bernhardt explained why it is important to spend time keeping good records and analyzing them. "Your lenders require it and your tax filings require it," he said. He went on to say what is even more important is, "It will improve your profitability and decision making."

"It will show you where you are spending your valuable management time. Where are your financial bottlenecks? What do you need to change to improve your bottom line?"

Dr. Bernhardt stressed that it is important to work your assets. "Make your assets return money and convert them into

(ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PG. 10)



Dr. Kevin Bernhardt, a professor of Agribusiness at UW-Platteville, gave the YC'ers input on how to analyze their financial records to achieve more profit and opportunity for their dairy operation.

On the first day of the YC conference, participants took a tour of White Hill Cheese in Shullsburg, Wis. **Bottom photo:** White Hill cheesemaker Jim Klein explains to his tour group the cheesemaking process at the plant. **Top right:** YC'ers watch as wheels of Baby Swiss are labeled and sent on their way to the warehouse. **Top left:** The YC'ers second stop on the tour was to S & S Farms in Lancaster, Wis. Here, Patrick Schroeder shows off the newly built free stall barn.





Carrie Mess Speaks Up For Ag

Dairy Carrie calls herself an ‘advocate’ -- a person who advocates for agriculture. Raised in Madison, Wis. Carrie has fond memories of visiting her grandparent’s small Wisconsin farm. While in high school, her involvement in FFA fueled her love for farming and indirectly led to her meeting and marrying Patrick Mess. The couple farms with Patrick’s parents, Clem and Cathy Mess, in Watertown, Wis.

She got involved with Ag Chat, a community of farmers, dairy producers and ranchers who connect on-line at agchat.org, and use Twitter and Facebook to spread positive news about America’s farmers and how they run their operations. She was inspired by other blogging ag advocates to begin her own dairy farm blog in 2011. She called it ‘Dairy Carrie’ and within a year, she had 5,000 people regularly checking it. In 2012, she had 55,000 followers. By the end of 2013, she had 1.1 million people checking out her blog on a regular basis. Dairy Carrie was on her way.

“We have knowledge, passion and trust of our customers on our side,” she told the YC’ers. “We need to influence people,

not educate them.”

Along the way, Carrie has answered hundreds of questions from curious or misinformed consumers. She has given them simple and straight-forward replies and picked up new ag supporters along the way. She hasn’t shied away from tough issues either, calling down restaurants that use incorrect ag information in their ads and on their menus to attract customers at the expense of America’s farmers. In the past two years, she has been traveling around the country from coast to coast telling her story at seminars and standing up for agriculture in the face of so many negative influences.

She encouraged the YC’ers to follow her lead. While you may not be ready to start your own on-line blog, you can invite your neighbors and local leaders to tour your farm. Stop and thank people in the grocery store when you see real dairy products in their shopping carts. Let them know you are a local dairy producer and you care about your farm and dairying in the community. If someone asks you a tough question about agriculture, give them a positive answer. “Remember, when it comes to dairy, you are the expert,” she says.

YC Conference _____ Cont. from Pg. 8

gross assets.” He also told YC’ers to use someone else’s money to make money for you. “Management of leverage is critical. Be efficient; keep all the revenue that you can.”

Swiss Valley Farms CEO Don Boelens presented an update on the co-op’s exporting success. He also outlined the safeguards that the co-op takes to insure the product is delivered to these distant countries in excellent condition as well as strategies that are in place to guarantee we receive payment for our products.

Craig Grothe, motivational speaker and farmer humorist from Crawfordsville, Iowa, wrapped up the conference with a talk on how to communicate with the older generation on the farm. Grothe drew from his own experiences in this area to share advice on cultivating patience when working with your parents and grandparents.

Since no YC’ers applied for the 2014 Outstanding Young Cooperator Contest during this meeting, a ‘second chance’ contest will be held later on this summer to fill this important position.



Left: Carrie Mess speaks to the YC’ers about how she started her ‘Dairy Carrie’ blog and the attention it has received.

Above: Carrie farms with her husband Patrick and her in-laws on a 100-cow dairy in Watertown, Wis.

ROCHESTER PLANT TOUR GREETES REPS

Did you know that Ford F-Series pickup truck sales are considered by some economists as a test of the strength of the U.S. economy? “Ford F-Series pickup sales gained 18% in 2013,” economist Phil Plourd of Blimling and Associates recently told the Swiss Valley Farms district reps at their annual March meeting, held this year in Rochester, Minn. He says that the top half of the economy in general is doing well.

During his talk, Plourd offered a wealth of information on why milk prices have peaked so high in America and where they are headed in the coming months. Milk

production in China was down 6% in 2013 and the recent milk production increase in New Zealand is being absorbed by China. Even though China’s appetite for dairy products is still alive, volume is declining a little. All powder prices are starting to slide.

Europe has a lot of milk and U.S. production also will be up. “The producer milk price will go down some, but it will not likely be a disaster.”

Plourd says a lot of cheese is leaving the country. “Seventy million pounds of cheese left the U.S. in January and there is virtually no cheese going into storage here,”

Below: Economist Phil Plourd of Blimling and Associates presented the district reps with his thoughts on what could happen in the dairy industry in the coming year.

At right: Before beginning the tour at the Rochester cheese plant, Marvin Ambrosy, Sherrill, Iowa, and all the district reps were greeted with a table full of cheese and cracker samples.





he says. “You will see cheese prices in the grocery stores start to climb. This is when consumer push back occurs. There will likely be less cheese moving at the retail level.”

Plourd sees the recently passed Farm Bill as a modest victory for dairy producers, but it may be a taxpayer nightmare since it could cost a lot of money to fund this new program. “There are a lot of details yet to be decided and announced. But it will be a benefit to dairy producers in the long run.” Plourd says that rules governing timing around coverage election will be critical – will producers have to choose their target several months ahead of or right before the new year?

Board Chair Pam Bolin, Clarksville, Iowa, opened the meeting encouraging the reps to be an ‘advocate’ for dairy every day—a person who speaks or writes to promote or defend agriculture. “In a world where

consumers are crying for locally produced food, tell them that milk is produced local and fresh every day,” Pam says. “It is naturally made and contains nine essential nutrients, which include calcium.”

CEO Don Boelens made a presentation on the financial state of the cooperative so far this year. Turn to Page 2 for more details on this.

Before their business meeting, the district reps toured the newly completed cheese plant attached to the Rochester Cheese warehouse. Jeff Saforek, VP/GM of Dairy Ingredients and plant manager Jim Kutchma took the reps through the plant, explaining the club cheese making process along the way.



Rochester Cheese plant manager Jim Kutchma takes a district rep tour group through the cheese mixing room. Several groups were led through the newly built plant prior to a business meeting for the reps.

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FOR SALE: 6 Delaval Milkmaster auto-takeoff with Harmony claws. 200 ft. 2 and 1-2 in. milk line and receiver jar and washer. Mitsibushi VSD with Sutobuilt vacuum pump with 7.5 3-phase motor with convertor. 200 ft. Delaval easyline. Contact Ward Friederich, Savanna, Ill. (815-273-4129)

FOR SALE: 180 Free Stall Dividers and 2000-gallon Surge bulk tank. Phone 563-880-7250

swiss valley farms

FIELD PERSONNEL & STATISTICS

Field Department & Procurement Division Directory

Chris Hoeger *VP Procurement*

Eldridge, IA 52748

Office 563.468.6628
Mobile 563.340.7943

Nancy Feeney *Member Relations*

3855 Manchester Dr • Bettendorf, IA 52722

Office 563.468.6640
Mobile 563.449.4451

Tim Genthe *Lab & Safety Manager*

803 S. School St. • Cuba City, WI 53807

Office 563.583.7669
Home 608.744.3515

Jesse Chandlee *Raw Milk Sales*

136 East 6th St. • Coal Valley, IL 61240

Office 563.468.6668
Mobile 563.663.1445

Ron Brenner *Field Supervisor*

1817 Loomis St. • LaCrosse, WI 54603

Mobile 608.790.1324
Office 608.781.5324

Thomas Tegeler *Field Supervisor*

1320 1^{1/2} St. SW • Dyersville, IA 52040

Office 563.583.7669
Home 563.875.2059

Randy Heisel

259 E. Lakeview Dr. • LaFarge, WI 54639

Home 608.625.2045
Mobile 608.386.6681

Mike Howald

7105 N. Freeport Rd. • Forreton, IL 61030

Office 815.938.2651
Mobile 563.599.2397

Kara Koopmann

6142 Roller Coaster Rd. • Epworth, IA 52045

Plant 563.583.7669
Home 563.876.3900

Roger Lenius

319 9th St. • Waverly, IA 50677

Mobile 563.599.2398
Home 319.352.5015

Ken Ley

225 S. Clifton • Livingston, WI 53554

Mobile 608.732.8361
Home 608.943.6240

Lynne Melchert

117 Culver Rd. NE • Hopkinton, IA 52237

Mobile 563.599.2394
Home 563.926.2794

Cheryl Zablocki-Wagner

W 1919 Hofa Park Dr. • Seymour, WI 54165

Office 920.822.2887
Mobile 920.660.9822

Bob Zielsdorf

309 North St. • Sparta, WI 54656

Mobile 563.599.2399
Home 608.269.5452
Fax 608.366.1772

During the Month of February, these Swiss Valley Farms Members averaged below 100,000 for their Somatic Cell count.

ALDINGER, ROGER	70,000
BAILEY, MICHAEL & JEAN	85,000
BENNETT, JOHN & CHARLENE	42,000
BREUCKMAN, CHAD	56,000
BRIMEYER, DANIEL & DEB	65,000
BRIMEYER, DEREK	65,000
BRIMEYER, MATTHEW R.	98,000
BRIMEYER, RICHARD	98,000
CAROLAN, KEVIN & DONNA	91,000
DAMROW, DON & DONNA	66,000
DREIER, RANDY D.	83,000
ENDRES, JOHN P.	83,000
ENDRES, JOSEPH E.	83,000
FRICKSON, ANDREW M.	71,000
GORHAM, FLORIEDA	85,000
HENDEL FARMS	84,000
HESSENIUS, CRAIG	76,000
IHM, DOUGLAS G.	93,000
JUNK, MELANIE M.	90,000
KETCHUM, ROBERT C & TERRI A	81,000
KLUESNER, LEO & JULIE	86,000
KOHOUT, KENNETH J. & ANITA	98,000
PEARCE, RICHARD J.	70,000
PRIER, DONALD	75,000
SAUER DAIRY FARM LLC	96,000
SCHOLLMAYER, AELRED	65,000
SCHOLLMAYER, DAVID	65,000
SCHOLLMAYER, WILLIAM	65,000
SCHUMACHER, PAUL & JENNIFER	91,000
SELKE, WALTER	58,000
SELKE, WILLIAM	58,000
STAUFFER, TITUS	64,000
STRIEF FARMS INC	89,000
THOMPSON, LARRY & LIANE	89,000
VALLEY VIEW DAIRY INC	82,000
VANDERHAM DAIRY LLC, BILL & LYNN	78,000
VEECH, RICHARD & KIM	88,000
WESTHOFF, NICHOLAS & JESSIE	86,000
WILLIAMS, DAVID A.	83,000

Somatic Cell Range -- Percentage listed is based on number of A Farms

0 - 100,000.....	7%
100,001 - 200,000.....	33%
200,001 - 300,000.....	28%
300,001 - 400,000.....	17%
400,001 - 500,000.....	8%
500,001 and above.....	7%



Have Your Lab Counts Texted to You

Swiss Valley members can now get a text message delivered to their cell phones containing their components from every tank of milk picked up on their dairy as soon as the lab sends the results to Swiss Valley, which is usually the next day.

Lab results include components (butterfat, protein and other solids), SCC and MUN score. The text is identified by the sequence number the hauler puts on the sample when picking up the milk.

To get signed up for texting, send your producer number and your cell phone number and cell phone provider to tim.genthe@swissvalley.com.

Welcome
**NEW SWISS
VALLEY FARMS
MEMBERS**

JAKE MILLS
Strawberry Point, IA

NATHAN & BRITA PREW
Eastman, WI

Future Milk Contracts Are Made Through the Blimling Office

Future Milk Contracting is open to Swiss Valley Farms members only. All futures' contracts are made directly through Blimling and Associates. To contract milk, call the offices of Blimling and Associates at 1-800-945-8891 and give them your farm number to get the process started. Through Blimling, you will have access to live market pricing and your contracting window will be larger.

You may contract milk from:

- 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Thursday CST and 8:30 to 1 p.m. Friday CST for the Class III-based program.
- 9:05 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday-Friday CST for Total Price Contracts (this includes Producer Price Contracts) and Options-based contracts.

For more details on Forward Fixed Price Milk Contracting, Swiss Valley members can log on to the members-only section of swissvalley.com.

swiss valley farms

ANTIBIOTIC POLICY

Antibiotic Policy

If a member suspects antibiotics in his or her bulk tank & calls a SWISS VALLEY FARMS field representative to report this before dumping the milk:

- **1st time** in a calendar year, the coop will pay 80% of the milk.
- **2nd & 3rd times** in a calendar year, the coop will pay 50% of the milk.
- **Over 3 times** in a calendar year, the coop will pay **zero**.

On the 1st offense, if a member has purchased a test kit and detects the positive antibiotic milk, SWISS VALLEY FARMS, CO. will reimburse that member \$75.00 toward the cost of the test kit.

All claims must be received by the corporate office for payment no later than 60 days after the milk was dumped.

The earliest dated claim turned in will be paid at 80% payment.

If antibiotics are found to be present in a farm truckload as a result of a screening test, the member will NOT be paid for that shipment of milk, and will be assessed as follows:

**Full cost of net load
plus the cost of disposal.**

Net load = total pounds on the load minus the member's pounds.

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Permit No. 141
Davenport, IA

Post Office Box 4493
Davenport, IA 52808

Address Service Requested

GET IN ON THE FUN!! TAKE PHOTOS FOR THE 2015 SWISS VALLEY CALENDAR CONTEST

2015!! Can you believe it!?

It's time to take photos for the Swiss Valley Farms 2015 Calendar Contest! Spring is a wonderful time to take photos on the farm! But please remember, we need photos from all the seasons to make a good calendar. Don't miss out. Get out those cameras and start shooting. Interesting things happen all year long on the dairy.

Good Luck!!

