

Dairy

Reed’s Dairy adds to capacity, retail footprint

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Reed’s Dairy, which gets fresh milk, ice cream and other locally produced foods into the hands of consumers via its own stores and a fleet of delivery trucks, recently expanded its manufacturing capacity and retail footprint.

The Idaho Falls-based business grew its dairy herd and upgraded its factory. Reed’s in mid-December opened a store at Lake Hazel and Five Mile roads in southwest Boise, its second in the Treasure Valley in the past year and a half. The business plans to open a third store in the area eventually.

President Alan Reed said the business spent some \$180,000 to remodel its production plant and add some new equipment,

“We can make our ice cream mix a little over one-third faster than we could



Claudia Kloss, left, talks with Store Manager Hannah Peacock while buying farm-fresh milk from the new Reed’s Dairy store in southwest Boise.

before, so that makes quite a bit of difference,” he said, referring to production-plant upgrades. “It just allows us to run more product with the same amount of (employee) hours.”

Reed’s added about 50 milking cows, mostly from among heifers having first calves and milking for the first time. That brought the milking herd to about 230.

“We needed some more

milk, and so it was good to bring those 50 extra animals in to milk,” Reed said.

Reed’s Dairy bottles and pasteurizes its own milk, and makes and sells mild cheddar cheese as well

as cheese curds. It sells cheese varieties and butter that other Idaho companies make. Idaho-sourced meats are available by home delivery but not in the stores.

Using its own dairy herd and processing plant to supply the stores and delivery trucks helps Reed’s control input costs. But the business still must compete with the lower prices retailers have charged for milk products in recent years, Reed said.

“If there is demand for our product, we want to fulfill that demand,” he said. “The more we can manufacture in our facility, the more efficient we can make our facility.”

The new store in southwest Boise meets recent and anticipated customer demand for ice cream, milk and other products while giving Reed’s milk and cheese an additional place to land.

Its Dec. 14 opening drew many visitors, and “they

were excited to have an ice cream store there,” Reed said. “A lot of them knew about us, and were glad they could get ice cream, milk and cheese right from our dairy farm.”

Claudia Kloss of Boise bought two half-gallon bottles of farm-fresh milk at the new store Dec. 19. She said it offers a close-proximity alternative to natural-food specialty stores, and complements local grocery and garden stores nearby.

“We still have a goal of having one more store in the Treasure Valley,” Reed said. “Our goal was to have three.”

A location has not been determined for the third Boise-area store, to open possibly within 18 months.

Reed’s also operates stores at its Idaho Falls dairy, and in nearby Ammon. In Twin Falls, another owner plans a store slated to carry Reed’s Dairy products.

Minnesota farmers address stress, mental health at workshop

Minnesota farmers get candid on stress, mental health at workshop

By NORA G. HERTEL
Saint Cloud Times

SAUK CENTRE, Minn. (AP) — Brenda Rudolph went in February for her first physical in three years, and she flipped out on her doctor about the price of milk, the 38-year-old dairy farmer and blogger said.

After that doctor’s visit, Rudolph started seeing a counselor, addressed a vitamin deficiency and noticed her negative thoughts about being a failure.

“I realized that I can’t change the situation that we’re in. I can’t change milk prices. I can’t stop farms from going bankrupt. But I can change how we are. And we are together, and that really does matter,” Rudolph said

to the Saint Cloud Times.

She recounted her experience in her Raising a Farmer blog in June and again Dec. 7 at the Farming in Tough Times workshop held by the University of Minnesota Extension.

Rudolph and her family aren’t the only farmers struggling with four years of low milk prices. Dairy farms across Minnesota have been closing. And the Rudolphs aren’t the only farmers facing down mental health challenges.

After a farmer died by suicide this fall, Emily Wilmes received calls from other farmers who wanted advice, said Wilmes, University of Minnesota Extension educator for Stearns, Benton and Morrison counties who organized the Farming in Tough Times workshop in Sauk Centre.

Farmers aren’t getting paid; they’re losing money; they’re struggling to feed their kids, Wilmes said. “We’re in a prolonged state of low prices, really across



Nora Hertel/Via Associated Press
Brenda Rudolph, a dairy farmer and blogger, talks about mental health at the Farming in Tough Times workshop in Sauk Centre, Minn., on Dec. 7.

agriculture.”

Farmers also must face market uncertainty, including international trade tensions and tariffs.

“There is a conversation you people have to have in America, rural America, that says, depression is part of

your life. It is not a sign of weakness. It’s a sign of reality,” said Dennis Hoiberg, an international consultant on farmer mental health who spoke at the workshop.

Hoiberg, an Australian with a psychology background, has worked with farming communities in South Africa, Vietnam, New Zealand and the United States.

“It’s like coming to a parallel universe when I come to the U.S.,” he said. Farmers and rural residents face challenges all around the world.

The U.S. “is a bit more repressed” on the topic of mental health compared to other countries, he said. Stress tends to be the focus rather than resiliency.

Hoiberg provided a number of tips to build resiliency at the workshop. It’s the second on the topic held by U of M Extension, Wilmes said. About 80 people attended, and Wilmes hopes there’s a ripple effect in part because of the agribusiness professionals who may pass on the lessons.

Mark Koehn, agricultural appraiser for the Stearns County Assessor’s Office, was there, talking about the strain he witnesses among farmers and his journey as a former farmer.

“I’ve had about a dozen of you folks break down in tears this summer,” Koehn said. “I see the stress out there, and I know what it’s like.”

Koehn grew up on a dairy farm in Central Minnesota then raised hogs in Holdingford. He won national Hog Farmer of the Year in 1987.

“Not all of you are going to survive this, and that’s OK,” Koehn said. “There is life after farming.”

But that reality can be tough for farmers debating whether to sell their farm or muddle through.

There’s a lot of emotion in the work of farming, Wilmes said. “For farmers, it’s more than just a job.”

When Rudolph was having a hard time, other people didn’t always understand that she and her husband couldn’t just skip a milking on their Morrison County dairy farm. It’s one of the reasons she started her blog, she said.

The emotional buy in to farm work can take a toll.

“Most of you folk are proud folk, and most you folk are very proud of what you do,” Hoiberg said to the farmers. “You’re also psychologically exposed because you are a true believer (in what you do).”

Here’s some of Hoiberg’s advice on how to be resilient in the face of stress, depression and mental illness.

- Resilience is not “grit;” it’s not working harder or “working smarter” or “doing more with less” — those phrases Hoiberg translated to working harder.
- “The first trick about looking after yourselves folks is learn to look up. Because there’s always beauty all around,” he said.
- Hope is important to resiliency, Hoiberg said. He turned it into an acronym: Healthy habits, Optimistic thinking, Planning and Enacting those plans.
- “Break it down. Don’t

stop moving. Don’t look back,” Hoiberg said about putting plans into action.

- Sleep and diet are crucial to resiliency, he said.
- Stress hormones build up during negative experiences, and if depression evolves into a clinical condition, there are effective kinds of therapy and medications that can help.
- “Resilience is not about being strong,” he said. “Resilience is about being whole.”

Farmers know how to deal with tough challenges, like changes in the cost of their products, Hoiberg said. “What you’ve got to be ready for in your life is not big stuff. It’s minor stuff.”

The little stuff will make you blow up, he said.

Rudolph experienced that when the smallest things, like powdered sugar all over the kitchen, would stir up a feeling that the world was coming to an end, she said.

“Your mental health is just like if you cut your finger and need a band-aid or broke a leg,” Rudolph said. “You need to take care of it.”

She encourages people to listen to their neighbors and friends, and check in on them.

“We just need to be honest with each other,” Rudolph said.

Wilmes echoed those sentiments.

“Don’t make excuses for people (and their unusual behavior), because you’re afraid of having a tough conversation,” she said. “Listen attentively. If people need help, they’ll let you know.”

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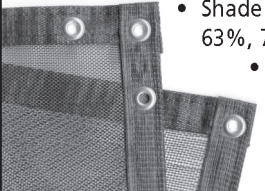
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Dairy prices are unsteady

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

DAIRY
MARKETS

Lee Mielke



Cash block cheese closed the Friday before Christmas at \$1.39 per pound, down 1 3/4-cents on the week and 10 1/4-cents below a year ago. The barrels finished at \$1.2950, down 1 1/2-cents, 11 1/2-cents below a year ago when they plunged 25 cents. Only 4 cars of barrel were traded last week at the CME.

The blocks lost 4 cents on Monday Christmas Eve, falling to \$1.35, while the barrels were unchanged. The

markets are closed Tuesday for Christmas and reopen Wednesday.

Demand is mixed in the Midwest cheese sector, says Dairy Market News.

Some Cheddar demand is seasonally slower but mozzarella and other pizza cheese producers suggest orders are steady to better than expected. Milk availability is varied but

a number of contacts suggested that milk was less available than expected.

Some cheesemakers suggest their inventories are “scant, as demand is seasonally lethargic but cheese markets are slowly beginning to show promise after a resoundingly bearish late fall.”

Western cheese sales have been solid but contacts say the supply chain is full.

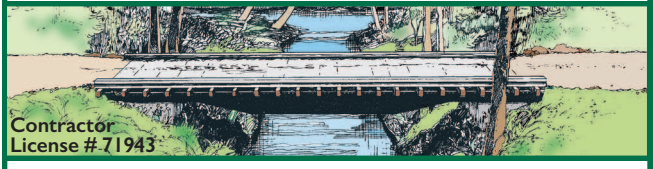
With the passing of the large chunk of holiday demand, manufacturers are wondering where a lift in sales would come from. Demand for mozzarella has been strong and lower market prices have generated more interest from international buyers.

Inventories are quite heavy and, with plenty of milk on hand, cheese output is expected to continue strong and that may make it difficult for the industry to reduce stockpiles in the near future.

Butter closed Dec. 21 at \$2.2050 per pound, up 1 1/2-cents on the week and 2 1/2-cents above a year ago when it lost 6 1/2-cents. 15 sales were reported for the week.

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