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ENVIRONMENTAL BENCHMARKING

CASE STUDY: Carey Farm

Farmer: Dan Carey

The dairy industry is complicated and it takes some experimentation to see and make a difference. That's the way it is with Dan Carey's farm in Groton, NY. Making some changes to his operation and the management of his dairy herd has improved economic benefits for the farm, the workers and the environment.

Dan has transitioned a bulk of his operation to a grass fed and pastured dairy where the cows get a significant portion of their nutritional needs from grazing on pasture including eating hay in winter. At first when he turned the cows out to pasture, he noticed a decline in production based on his practice of milking twice daily . This can and is often alarming to a farmer when your income is tied to the amount of milk that you can produce. But Dan stayed the course and saw lower production costs including feed, fertilizer, labor, lessened manure spreading and fuel consumption. It has paid off in helping improve the business bottom line. He keeps track of the pastures so they are not overgrazed, rotating through about one hundred acres. The cows are moved often to keep their diets enriched with the balanced nutrition rations, that include enough protein, in order to keep their production predictable.

The size of his herd is determined and kept in check by the amount and capacity of the land available for grazing. He has been able to reduce the issues and problems that arise from manure handling as grazed animals deposit most of their waste directly on the land where it breaks down naturally and fertilizes the

Farm Details



MUNICIPALITY:
Groton

FARM SIZE:
880 Acres

PRODUCTS:
Dairy

PRACTICES:

- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Strip Tillage
- Minimum Tillage
- Cover Crops
- Stream Bank Protection
- Rainwater Runoff Containment System
- Field Drainage by Tiles
- Field Drainage by Ditches
- Rotational Grazing
- GPS Tractor System/Auto-Steering
- Silage Leachate Control & Mgmt System
- Agrichemical Handling Facility
- Pre-coolers
- Variable Speed Drive for Milk Pump
- High-Efficiency Lighting

MOST PROUD OF:

- Rotational Grazing

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soil. Healthy soils include attributes of good soil structure, high amounts of organic matter and microorganisms. These help to stimulate deep roots and lush pasture growth, increasing the water holding capacity and lessening erosion. This is helpful to lessen drought impacts on the farm and can help to reduce flooding. Herd health is a significant factor. Herd health is always on the mind of responsible dairy operators. Cows feed and produce better when cool and able to roam. While pastured, their hooves stay cleaner as well, keeping for cleaner and healthier livestock.

Future plans for the Carey farm include transitioning his son, Eric, into the management fold. Next year there are plans for building manure storage. As part of the Owasco Lake watershed, good farming practices include protecting our public waters. Farms and animal feeding operations are concerned about this as well. The construction of adequate manure containment facilities and riparian buffers are good for business, the public and the environment.

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