

Division of Marketing
Agricultural Development and Diversification (ADD) Program
1997 Grant Final Report

Grant Number 12033

Grant Title Custom Heifer Raising Program

Amount Awarded \$25,120.00

Name David Sattler

Organization Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association
Baraboo

E-Mail

WEB

Department Contact: DATCP - Marketing - ADD Grants
PO Box 8911 Madison, WI 53708-8911
Tel: (608)224-5136
<http://datcp.state.wi.us>

The Equity Dairy Heifer Program

Introduction

Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association recognized the need for the expanding dairy industry in Wisconsin to have a consistent supply of high quality replacement heifers. Although the custom heifer raising industry had been growing, it was not keeping pace with the milk producing industry. Many of the facilities being utilized were inadequate and financing for improvements was difficult to obtain. There were not many heifer raisers that had achieved the capacity to serve the larger dairies in the state and to obtain the economies of scale that could lower their raising costs. In summary, it was difficult for expanding dairies to find the heifer raising service they desired.

The program's initial phase objective was to perform the necessary research and development to devise a program that is beneficial to dairy producers and heifer growers. To accomplish this, the program needed to address the following areas:

1. Assist in developing specialized custom heifer enterprises that raise healthy replacement heifers.
2. Create economies of scale so that heifers may be raised on a custom basis more economically than compared to traditional Wisconsin dairy operations.
3. Provide career alternatives for dairy producers who do not desire management of a large milking facility.
4. Help develop another market for Wisconsin's forages.
5. Meet the demand for Wisconsin's dairy heifer replacement needs and then look at the possibility of raising replacement heifers for milking operations beyond the state's borders.
6. Utilize/convert some existing dairy facilities for custom heifer raising.
7. Provide gainful employment for those living in rural areas.
8. Offer financing so that both the heifer growers and dairy producers operate with a more favorable cash flow.
9. Raise healthy replacement heifers more economically to improve Wisconsin dairy producers' competitive advantage

As the program progressed beyond the developmental stage, the logistical details needed to be devised. Those details included:

1. Procurement of heifer raisers.
2. Procurement of participating dairies.
3. Obtain a consistent and efficient supply of heifers to enter the feeding lots.
4. Devise a computer program to track the heifers and their performance.
5. Monitor the cost of raising the heifers to adequately compensate the raiser, while still providing a quality replacement at an economical price.

The benefits to Wisconsin Agriculture could be divided into two categories. Benefits to the raiser and benefits to the dairy producer.

The advantages for the raiser are as follows:

1. Selection of quality calves to enter the feeding program. Poorer quality calves would take longer to grow and cost more per pound of gain than healthy calves.
2. Support of a high performance program. By utilizing the experience and expertise of the personnel involved in the program, feeders can increase rates of gain and efficiencies in their businesses.
3. Guaranteed payment. By participating in ELCC's program, growers are guaranteed a payment for their services. For those buying and selling heifers, the program sets a price at the time of purchase to guarantee margins.
4. Cash flow. ELCC will provide a partial payment on a monthly basis to provide funds for operating expenses.
5. Access to a large pool of animals. It is essential to keep raising facilities full to maximize profits for raisers.
6. Provides a market for the sale of homegrown forages through livestock. This value will vary from year to year, but the price would be locked in through heifer contracts.
7. Provides a use for existing facilities.
8. Computer program and technical support. An efficient record keeping system will be essential to running a profitable heifer-raising business.

In summary, this program provides an opportunity for Wisconsin farmers to market their forages through dairy heifers, when they do not have an interest in milking cows.

Benefits for dairy producers include:

1. Receive consistent, quality replacement heifers. In order to be profitable, dairy producers need access to replacement heifers of proper weight and size.
2. Cash flow. Dairy producers can benefit from receiving a payment for calves and not having monthly raising costs as the heifer grows. A predetermined price for springing heifers can be budgeted for well in advance of repurchasing animals as springers.
3. Utilize genetics built into a dairy herd. By organizing growers to raise a producer's replacements and have a successful AI program the dairy producer realizes increased genetic potential.
4. Decrease time spent monitoring growth of replacement heifers.
5. Reduce capital investment. If dairy producers raise replacements on their own dairy operations, they would need to build heifer facilities.

In summary, involvement in this custom heifer raising program allows dairy producers to focus their financial and labor resources on milking cows. The program also provides high quality replacements, positive cash flow and reduced capital investments.

Implementation

Equity Livestock Credit Corporation manager, Jay Goff, consulted with numerous industry personnel in 1996 to develop the framework for the heifer raising program. Some of the grant funds were used to hire Dr. Ed Kopel. Kopel is a consulting veterinarian who focuses on dairy management and production medicine. He has extensive experience with large dairies and heifer raising. Kopel developed the program guidelines pertaining to; biosecurity, facility specifications, ration and growth rates and heifer handling protocol.

To detail these aspects of the program Dr. Kopel wrote several documents. The Program Coordinators Manual, The Program Feeder Manual and the Source Dairy Manual. Included in these manuals were the necessary forms to track the heifers until a computer program was developed. Also included was an informational brochure which was sent to prospective feeders and dairies.

Dave Sattler was hired in January of 1997 as the Director of Dairy Programs. His main responsibility would be to manage the heifer raising program. One of Sattler's initial responsibilities was to research the costs of raising heifers and devise an equitable compensation program for the raisers. As program details and costs were generated, promotion of the program was initiated. At the same time Goff was finalizing the contracts with the lawyers. Equity would have a contract with the dairies and another one with the feeder. The contracts constructed, covered general terms and separate riders would be completed with each group of heifers entering the program.

The Equity Dairy Heifer Program was promoted in several ways. The first major introduction was through the 1997 Equity Cooperative district meetings. This also attracted stories from some of the state agricultural newspapers. These newspapers were also sent news releases initially and as the program had notable events. Equity also purchased advertising to solicit participants in the Wisconsin State Farmer, the Country Today and the Agri-View. The Equity News Round-Up, a bimonthly member newsletter, was also utilized to introduce and update members about the program.

The most successful method of attracting participants appears to be word of mouth. Considerable effort was spent discussing the program with industry personnel. Presentations were given at Winter Ag Expo, a Land O' Lakes meeting, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Farm Progress Days and World Dairy Expo. Details of the program were also explained to Wisconsin Extension personnel, Farm Credit Services, Kent Feeds, Vita-Plus, Cargill, ANC, Elanco, KFIZ radio, several of the AI organizations, bankers and industry consultants. These contacts are extremely important as Wisconsin producers make decisions about their future.

Dr. Kopel spent several days with Sattler visiting some of the first people interested in becoming raisers in The Equity Dairy Heifer Program. This was a good opportunity to learn what would be required of the raiser and what needed to be demanded in facilities to raise heifers in a highly managed system. Kopel's directives have proven to be very helpful and in many cases necessary.

The program's organizational details consumed more time than expected and the first heifers entered the program in July 1997. By the end of 1998 about 1,700 heifers, from 23 producers were on feed at 13 different locations. The feeders are located in Bonduel, Wittenberg, Pulaski, New London, Oconto, Sturgeon Bay, Oakfield, Allenton, Bloomer, and Bangor, WI. We also work with feedlots in Cambridge, IL and Blue Grass, IA.

At this point all of the raisers in the program have capacities from 150 to 500 heifers. Several of the feeders have cattle on the Equity program along with privately contracted heifers. As their businesses progress, it is likely that the numbers per feeder will increase by expansion and moving toward exclusive populations. Caring for more heifers per feeder will decrease the management time necessary from Equity Livestock.

The initial design of The Equity Dairy Heifer Program was to raise heifers from 500 pounds to springing heifers. It quickly became apparent that there was a demand for raising calves from birth to 500 pounds. Shawano Equity Cooperative had already started promoting a program to raise calves, but was missing the financing part of the equation. In September 1997 we teamed up with some of the calf raisers in the Shawano area to determine the feasibility of adding calf raising to our program. By the end of the year it was an official part of The Equity Dairy Heifer Raising Program.

Although there had been considerable time and money spent on the design of the program, it was also entered into with the attitude that changes would be made when it was determined that there could be improvements. After 18 months of feeding heifers there have been minimal changes in the program for heifers more than 500 pounds. The initial guidelines have been very accurate, and about the only changes have been the individual adjustments on the lots to achieve the desired growth rates. The original pay schedule has remained unchanged. However, the raiser's compensation is linked with the changing feed markets, so that has decreased over with the cost of feed.

Most of the changes have occurred in the raising of the calves in the first four months of age. Originally we purchased calves from three to 10 days of age. Although this is still the practice in some cases it does appear to be beneficial to wait until the calf is at least a week old to transport it. When a herd is enrolled to purchase calves at birth, their vaccination program is examined. A protocol for care of the dry cows and newborn calves is presented to them. If there are problems raising their calves a series of Immunoglobulin testing has proven very helpful in determining if improvement is required in the care of the calf at birth or after it arrives on the raisers facility. This apparently is a procedure that very few dairies have used in the past.

From a compensation standpoint we underestimated the medical costs involved in raising these young calves. Our average veterinary and medicine costs to get a calf to 300 pounds are about \$40. The biggest challenge is caring for calves that are purchased from a dairy that is in the process of a major expansion. These situations present a number of challenges. Generally, the additional cattle purchased are first calf heifers. It is well documented that the colostrum quality increases with increased calvings. In some herds, colostrum from older cows can be frozen and fed to calves from first calf heifers. In large expansions there generally are not enough older cows to supply colostrum for all of the calves. The vaccination programs of the heifer will also affect the colostrum quality. In many cases these are not known on purchased heifers and the heifers may not be on the new dairies facilities long enough to adequately booster the immune system. These heifers are also under different nutritional programs and are stressed by moving them into a new environment shortly before calving. All of these factors can lead to calves that are smaller at birth and less able to stand the challenges they will face in the first months of age.

How we properly compensate raisers for small calves compared to large calves, was one of the questions we had before we started raising young calves. After raising hundreds of calves it appears the additional cost for small calves is due to increased medical expenses and death loss. On healthy calves the weight gains are very similar between 70 pound calves and 100 pound calves. The compensation to calf growers is by weight gain, so we do not have a different scale for different size calves. Working with the small calves is considered a part of doing business. The raisers do however have the right to reject calves that are not healthy.

The other aspect of calf raising that has proven to be very important is solid partitions between calves. This was our original recommendation, but some of the raisers decided to use wire panels to save cost and increase ventilation. We thought as long as the calves were not touching each other that panels could be acceptable. Our analysis at this point is that the increased cost of plywood or fiberglass partitions is not only worth the investment, but a necessary element of raising healthy calves. The solid dividers prevent contact from calf to calf, reduce drafts on the calf and allow the calf to more easily keep itself warm in severe weather. A solid roof over the back part of the individual pen is also beneficial in winter.

Conclusion

The goal at the beginning of this project was to raise more than 5,000 heifers. At the end of 1998 there have been about 2,500 heifers enter the program, with 1,700 currently in inventory. The slower growth can be attributed to a couple of factors. Producers are more comfortable having a local grower that they know and at a place where they can keep an eye on their heifers. With a third party involved, costs of managing the heifers may be more than other raisers will charge. It will take time to prove that the additional expense is justified with improved performance. As the program grows it will also be possible to have growers located in various areas to reduce hauling costs and increase convenience for the dairies. The growers also need to gain experience and numbers to perform at optimal levels. As we look into the future, it is likely that custom heifer raising will be a growing sector of the dairy industry in the upper Midwest. We feel The Equity Dairy Heifer Program will continue to grow and be a profitable addition to the cooperative.

Although the capacity of the program has been less than expected, the overall performance of the heifers has been excellent in most cases. Growth rates have often been approximately two pounds per day. Artificial insemination has been successful, even with raisers that did not have previous experience. The biggest challenge in breeding the heifers is encouraging raisers to initiate the breeding near 800 pounds instead of allowing the heifers to get too large before the first service. Maintaining rations for proper growth has not been proven to be too difficult.

The Equity Dairy Heifer Program has emphasized height, or frame growth from the beginning. In addition to a proper ration, our feeling was that adequate exercise was essential. For calves more than 300 pounds, the recommendation is to provide 200 to 400 square feet of exercise area per heifer. Many raisers questioned the necessity of this space initially. However, after adding the space it is evident that there are several benefits. The exercise encourages bone and muscle formation, it reduces bedding use and results in cleaner heifers that require less energy for growth. In addition, the exercise area improves estrous activity and foot health.

Another area that was a new concept for many raisers is measuring the growth on a routine basis with an individual scale. This too has proven to be very valuable. Many of the raisers consider the scales and handling facilities to be the best investment they made. It really makes management decisions much easier and more accurate.

The most common method of payment in the heifer raising industry is for the heifer raiser to bill the dairy producer a per day fee. In The Equity Dairy Heifer Program the raisers are paid by performance, or the growth they accomplish. This may be the most important aspect of the program. It not only rewards the most efficient growers, but provides an economic benefit to produce a herd replacement that is the most beneficial for the raiser and the producer.

The most challenging area of heifer raising, is the newborn or "wet" calves. This is the most difficult group of calves to find potential raisers and the most difficult stage to raise. The encouraging aspect of this stage is that it may provide an opportunity for young people interested in a career in livestock. The initial investment per animal is less than with older heifers and it is not necessary to have a large land base. The key to success is having the proper facilities and acquiring high quality calves. The quality of the calves depends greatly on the care they receive during the first hours of life on the source dairy. Monitoring the immunity of the calves can help the source dairy improve their calf care.

Our experiences in the last 15 months reveal that the proper facilities have the following attributes. Individual calf pens with at least solid sides and potentially a solid back and roof. Clean, dry air in all types of weather conditions, without having excess drafts on the calves. An efficient design for feeding and cleaning are an advantage from a labor standpoint but may not affect calf performance.

Finally, an aspect of the heifer raising industry that has gained momentum in the last two years, is biosecurity. When initially introducing The Equity Dairy Heifer Program protocol of BVD and Johne's testing many of the dairy producers and their veterinarians thought it was unnecessary and a waste of money. That attitude has greatly changed since then across the whole dairy industry. In our program it has proven to be a valuable method to reduce the spread of these two diseases. It is gratifying to know that Equity Livestock may have had a small part in leading the dairy industry toward a more healthy population.

The majority of the raisers for Equity Livestock are new growers in the business. Equity provided some consultation for facility design and a business plan. The availability of heifers was probably the main reason for becoming a part of the program. Some of these raisers have and will evolve to continue their business with private clients and other raisers will continue to be 100% involved in The Equity Dairy Heifer Program. Either way Equity has been an integral part of the development of a new business in the state and a benefit to Wisconsin Agriculture. That is the basic purpose of the program. To support the evolution of the Wisconsin dairy industry which is vital to the success of our cooperative.

Run during the
weeks of May 21 & 28

Introducing Custom Dairy Heifer Raising

Let Equity Livestock Credit Corporation put the
spotlight on your herd's heifers.

If you're looking for a way to raise heifers without facilities,
labor, time or management, this is the solution for you.
Equity Livestock Credit Corporation will buy your young
heifers, place them in a highly supervised growing lot for
you to repurchase within 30-60 days of freshening.
This is the BEST time management, cost savings tool you'll find.

Call Dave Sattler Today! **EQUITY**

715-526-6516

Equity Livestock Credit Corporation
is the wholly owned subsidiary of
Equity Cooperative Livestock
Seller Association

THE EQUITY DAIRY HEIFER PROGRAM

A program designed
with your dairy heifer raising needs in mind.



If you're looking for a way to raise heifers without facilities, labor, time or management,

The Equity Dairy Heifer Program is your solution to success.

Equity Livestock Credit Corporation will buy your young heifers, place them in a highly supervised growing lot for you to repurchase approximately 45 days of calving.

- OR -

If you have facilities available and have the desire to raise dairy heifers,
please contact:



**Dave Sattler at
715-526-6516**

<http://www.equitycoop.com>

EQUITY LIVESTOCK CREDIT CORPORATION

NOW OFFERING

Equity Dairy Heifer Program **and** **Equity Dairy Leasing Program**

The Equity Dairy Heifer Program is a clearly defined and structured system in all phases of raising replacement dairy heifers . . . from the selection of young heifers, through the management of nutrition, bio security, health and breeding, to the return of the springing heifer on the milk producer's farm, while providing markets for crops, management skills, and use of facilities for the grower.

The Equity Dairy Leasing Program is an alternative to conventional financing that provides real advantages in managing capital. It provides the opportunity to lease milking stock and use available money for other cash needs of the operation. By adding animals needed for replacement or expansion through a leasing program, full utilization of all facilities and acreage can be accomplished while realizing optimum income and potential tax savings.

CONTACT US TODAY FOR A EXPLANATION OF HOW WE CAN HELP YOU.



Equity Livestock Credit Corporation is a subsidiary of Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association, E10890 Penny Lane, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913 <http://www.equitycoop.com>
Please call 800-362-3989 for more information.

EQUITY COOPERATIVE LIVESTOCK SALES ASSOCIATION

76 YEARS OF SERVICE

- 16 Auction Market Locations
- 33 Weekly Livestock Auctions
- 18 Hog Marketing Centers
- Feedlot Sales
- Special Feeder Cattle Sales
- Hay Auctions
- Wisconsin Lamb Pools
- Equity's Electronic Lamb Auction
- Equity Carcass Auction
- Livestock Feeding Program
- Agricultural Lending
- Great Lakes Order Buyers
- Deferred Contracts
- Price Protection
- Internet Feeder Cattle Sales Listings



EQUITY LIVESTOCK CREDIT CORPORATION

NOW OFFERING

Equity Dairy Heifer Program and Equity Dairy Leasing Program

The Equity Dairy Heifer Program is a clearly defined and structured system in all phases of raising replacement dairy heifers . . . from the selection of young heifers, through the management of nutrition, bio security, health and breeding, to the return of the springing heifer on the milk producer's farm, while providing markets for crops, management skills, and use of facilities for the grower.

The Equity Dairy Leasing Program is an alternative to conventional financing that provides real advantages in managing capital. It provides the opportunity to lease milking stock and use available money for other cash needs of the operation. By adding animals needed for replacement or expansion through a leasing program, full utilization of all facilities and acreage can be accomplished while realizing optimum income and potential tax savings.

CONTACT US TODAY FOR A EXPLANATION OF HOW WE CAN HELP YOU.



Equity Livestock Credit Corporation is a subsidiary of Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association, E10890 Penny Lane, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913 <http://www.equitycoop.com>
Please call 800-362-3989 for more information.



EQUITY NEWS ROUND-UP

Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association

March/April 1997 Volume 35 Number 2

INTRODUCING...Custom Dairy Heifer Raising

The producers called and Equity answered. At the request of our patrons, Equity Livestock Credit Corporation spent the last year and a half developing a program to sustain and promote Wisconsin's dairy industry. As a result, Jay Goff, vice president of credit services, formulated a custom dairy heifer raising program.

Within this program Equity will purchase heifers at 500 pounds, place them with an approved feeder until they are about 60 days from freshening and then reselling them back to the original owner at a previously contracted price.

The contracts will include requirements for feeding, herd health, breeding and guarantees based on targets for final weights and calving dates. Dairy producers may request specified AI sires and/or health programs but must be within reason of operations.

To become a qualified grower, one needs to have the facilities, financing and management skills to produce sound cattle that have the genetic potential to reach acceptable calving weights at 22 to 23 months. Growers will have need to employ veterinary services for regular herd health and are required to have a scale on property for

regularly recording weights. Equity Livestock Credit Corporation can provide financing and will pay growers a monthly fee to cover expenses and keep operations running.

Incoming heifers will be purchased at the prevailing market price, with the repurchase price contingent on Equity's inputs; primarily feed.

David Sattler, Shawano, Wis., was hired the first part of the year to spearhead this program. He has an extensive background with genetics, AI breeding and the dairy industry. He feels producers

have been seeking this type of program and believes that this is just one means for maintaining the strength of Wisconsin's dairy industry.

Finding the right facilities to accommodate growth for large framed heifer is the area of largest concern, as most former dairy operations would need to be renovated to meet program requirements.

Producers, large and small are encouraged to check out the possibilities of this program.

If you are interested in either placing heifers or being a grower, please contact David Sattler at 715-526-9121.

Equity Goes On-Line

www.equitycoop.com

It is website mania and Equity will soon be a part. Within the next few weeks you'll be able to surf to Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association's very own website at www.equitycoop.com.

This site is designed with the user in mind. Everything from market locations, sale schedules, new program descriptions and daily market quotes. You'll find it all. This timely information is available to anyone with internet access. For those interested, but don't have internet linkage, contact your local high school or

library to see if they have internet outlets available to the public.

We hope that this site will allow people to become better informed about our cooperative and aid in communications.

This is your opportunity to receive timely information, have your questions or concerns addressed, or simply pass along your suggestions. You can begin e-mailing us at mailbag@equitycoop.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Friday Elected To Board of Directors

During the Ripon/Lomira district II annual meeting on Thursday, March 13, Jerry Friday was elected to serve a three year term as region director. In this position, Friday represents the entire district II membership on the regional 12-member board.

Friday has been involved with the Equity Ripon Livestock Marketing Cooperative for the last 10 years and currently serves as president. He and his family operate a 250-acre beef and grain farm near Markesan.

Friday looks forward to his new responsibilities and working for the benefit of all producers.



Jerry Friday
District II Region Director

Diversification is the Key to Our Success



Gregory A. Beck
President and C.E.O.

The last six months have felt like a whirlwind. I've been busy meeting community leaders, becoming fully acquainted with Equity and developing an aggressive path for the cooperative's future. I have observed many areas for potential growth and want to explore every avenue. It is my goal to maintain and expand Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association's role as a leader in livestock marketing and in all progressive agricultural pursuits.

The first area of emphasis has been custom dairy heifer raising. In working with both large and small producers, it is our attempt to support and sustain the growing demands of today's dairy producer. Dave Sattler is committed full-time to this project and has found much demand from both dairy producers as well as grower/finishers.

Another area we have placed much emphasis upon is stimulating Wisconsin's hog industry. Over recent years,

Wisconsin has experienced the opportunity cost from the loss of 150,000 sows, equating to 2,700,000 market hogs that are no longer available to add value to 35 million bushels of corn or approximately 293,000 acres. Equity is exploring ways that will enable producers to compete effectively against the totally integrated factory farms while maintaining independence and environmentally sound nutrient management practices. Please watch upcoming issues of *Equity News Round-Up* for more details.

In an effort to open the lines of communications and increase our exposure, we have developed a website, www.equitycoop.com, to promote our programs and

share information. Anyone can log on to our site and view the daily state-wide market report, market schedules, locations and program information. In addition, questions can quickly be answered as an e-mail link is directed to the headquarters and regularly checked.

We are also exploring greater electronic auction uses; increasing species handled as well as capabilities. For example, we are studying the possibilities of adding special fed veal and feeder lambs. We are also testing the use of the internet to broaden availability and exposure.

Most recently, Dave Johnson joined the management team as Vice President of Marketing-Sheep, Lambs and

Goats. His primary emphasis is to increase marketing levels in the sheep, lamb and goat sectors. Expansion is the key here. Dave will be investigating new markets throughout the upper Midwest and nation.

These above areas are just the beginning. As a patron, you can feel assured that Equity is going to expand and change with the times to remain a leading agricultural force. Your opinion is vital to these and all other program developments, please feel free to discuss your ideas with your regional director, local market manager, or me. I truly look forward to the challenges, opportunities and achievements ahead.

Equity Recognizes Howard Zellmer

In September of 1989, Howard Zellmer became a member of the regional board of directors, representing district II, Ripon/Lomira. Throughout the years he has given much time and talent to the fostering of cooperative development and livestock marketing advancement.

Recently, Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association presented Howard with a plaque as a sign of thanks and recognition for his many dedicated years of service.



John Siegmund, Chairman of the Board, presents Howard Zellmer with a plaque of recognition and thanks.



EQUITY NEWS ROUND-UP

Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association

May/June 1998 Volume 36 Number 3

Dairy Heifer Program Reaches 1,000

In just under a year of the program's existence, Equity's Dairy Heifer Program enrolled its 1,000th heifer. Within this program, Equity Livestock Credit Corporation purchases heifers, consigns them to a grower for a designated time period, and then resells them to the original producer at a predetermined price.

The Growers

The 1,000th heifer is being raised at the Chuck and Shirley Wendler farm, Wittenberg, Wis. Chuck has been a longtime supporter of heifer raising in the Shawano area. He is employed by Shawano Equity Cooperative as a livestock production specialist, assisting agricultural producers with feed rations and management decisions. He has encouraged several producers to have their heifers custom raised. When one of his customers asked him why he didn't do it? Chuck and his wife Shirley embraced the challenge and within a matter of weeks a calf greenhouse was built and the first cycle of calves were in place.

Shirley is responsible for all feeding, medicating, record keeping and cleaning of the calves. She was raised on a Birnamwood farm and has easily acclimated into this care giving role.

As operations grew and



Heifer 1,000 is pictured with her raisers and original owners. From left to right: Chuck Wendler, Shirley Wendler, Kyle Utke, Cindy Utke, Becca Utke, Elizabeth Utke and Chris Utke.

more herds were placed at the Wendler farm, they built a second greenhouse to hold the calves from weaning to 300 pounds. At that point, the calves are moved up the road to the Scott Wendler farm, Chuck's cousin, where he cares for them to 500 pounds. From there, they are transferred to a large feedlot, bred and are finally returned to the original owners within 45 days of calving.

The Dairy Producers

Chris and Cindy Utke, a brother sister team of Clintonville, Wis., have farmed together since 1986 and officially became partners in 1996. Presently, they milk 75 cows and have a rolling herd average of 26,200 pounds. They officially made the decision to expand in January 1997. Since that point

they have outlined their future goal: to concentrate on the dairy herd through the development of more progressive facilities and increasing the milking herd to 150.

One of the first moves the Utkes made towards accomplishing their goal was to have their calves raised off their farm. Chuck, who works with the Utkes' feed ration through the Shawano Equity Coopera-

tive, made the initial connection and brought the first calves home for Shirley to raise.

Making the Connection

In November, Dave Sattler, Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association's director of dairy programs, was sought out by the Wendlers and the Utkes to enroll them in the Dairy Heifer Program. Dave is responsible for all paperwork and provides additional services to both the Wendlers and the Utkes.

Presently, the Utkes have 48 heifers in the Dairy Heifer Program and the Wendlers are raising heifers for four other Dairy Heifer Program producers.

How To Get Involved

Producers who are interested in either raising dairy heifers or having their heifers raised by a grower, should contact Dave Sattler at 715-526-6516.

Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales
Association

Salutes

America's Dairy Farmers

