



Instead of buying land and building a dairy barn, young dairymen can just lease land and buy a mobile parlor, says Dave Herring.



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## Mobile Milking Parlor Helps Get Into Dairy

A mobile milking parlor in Maine may make it easier for younger farmers to get into the dairy business. The experimental 8-cow parlor can be picked up and moved as needed, whether from pasture to pasture or from one farm to another.

"The mobile parlor will let us move it as we move the cattle to different areas," says Dave Herring, executive director, Wolfe's Neck Farm. "It could also be a lower cost entry for new dairymen. Instead of buying land and building or retrofitting a dairy, they can lease land and buy this type of parlor. If they need to move to a new farm, they can take the parlor with them."

Wolfe's Neck bills itself as a demonstration farm and educational resource center for innovative and sustainable practices in agriculture and natural resources. As part of a new organic dairy training program at the farm, they are building a herd of 60 cows. Working with the University

of Maine extension service and a grant from Stoneyfield Organic, Wolfe's Neck investigated mobile dairies.

While on sabbatical, Rick Kersbergen, University of Maine, Cooperative Extension, visited Mark McAfee (see FARM SHOW'S Vol. 31, No. 3) in California and also some European dairymen with mobile parlors.

"Dairymaster is an Irish company that makes a mobile parlor that's available in 6, 8, 10 or 12-cow models," says Kersbergen. "It can be trailered into position and raised or lowered on its hydraulic legs."

Features include a tank for wastewater, a small bulk tank for cooling the milk, an auto-washer and an on-board boiler.

Cows step up and onto the parlor deck and, once secured, the deck raises up to a comfortable milking height. Once cows have been milked, the platform is lowered, the cows leave and the next group enters.

When it is time to move the parlor, it is

raised on its legs and the trailer backs under it. The parlor is lowered, the legs are retracted, and it's moved to the next site.

Wolfe's Neck bought an 8-cow model. However, some changes needed to be made to meet Maine and U.S. dairy and environmental regulations.

"We worked very closely with the regulators, including dairy inspectors, to modify the parlor," says Herring.

Dairymaster (www.dairymaster.com) made the changes and shipped the parlor. A representative of the company was on site to assist in set up. Herring expected the parlor would be up and running by the end of August.

"We expect to milk 48 cows per hour," says Herring.

Concrete pads with docking stations for electricity and water connections will be set up at each of 2 or 3 pastures sites for warm weather milking. During the winter months,

the parlor will sit inside a building at the home farm.

"The ideal scenario would be to be more mobile, but we don't expect to move it often," says Herring. "We are trying to do this in a cost-effective manner."

Herring reports that purchase, shipping and setup cost around \$100,000.

"We hope to be able to bring the cost down," he says. "Mobile parlors are deployed in dozens of situations overseas, but not in the U.S. We are hoping to prove it can be a cost-effective tool here to get more young people into the industry."

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## Ram Truck Now Has 2.5 Million Miles

In 2011 FARM SHOW interviewed Howard Clayton of Waterloo, Iowa, who had driven his Dodge Ram 3500 pickup nearly 1.7 million miles (Vol 35, No. 2). We checked in with Howard this August and were astonished to learn he's still driving the same truck. It now shows nearly 2.5 million miles on the odometer.

Clayton rolls more than 130,000 miles a year as a contract driver for Bennett Trucking of McDonald, Georgia. Although he lives in Iowa, technically he 'lives in his truck', delivering 5<sup>th</sup> wheel camper trailers from Indiana manufacturers to dealers across the country. "I've been in every state of the lower 48, and several provinces in Canada," Clayton says proudly. "I ordered the 3500 1-ton dually with a 5.9 engine in 2000 and I've been driving it ever since. It's never caused me a lick of problems because I pay attention to regular maintenance and change the oil and filter every 10,000 miles. The engine has been overhauled once with new pistons, bearings and a crank."

Since we last visited with Clayton he's put in a new transmission and rear end and installed several sets of tires. All of his service work is performed by Forest Cunningham from Hallsville, Missouri. He says the engine just purrs along and he uses high quality synthetic fluids. "It's just a super vehicle that's comfortable and it has plenty of power," Clayton says. It has a 6-speed manual transmission and enough power so Clayton can tow trailers up to 42 ft. long. Loaded he gets around 13 mpg but on return trips



Clayton is shown with high mileage Dodge Ram 4 yrs. ago. He criss-crosses the country delivering trailers.

that number jumps to over 20. He gets paid by the loaded mile and travels primarily on freeways. Clayton works 12 months a year and is often on the road 5 to 6 weeks at a time. His wife sometimes accompanies him, but mostly it's just he and his Ram Truck, a CB and XM radio.

"I've been doing this so long I know the good places to stay and eat and have truck stop friends all over the country," Clayton says. Even though he's 74, he still puts in a full day's work, leaving early in the morning and parking by mid-afternoon so he has a place to get a good night's sleep. "There's more and more trucks on the road every year, and I'm just one of the old-timers," Clayton says. "I'll keep at this as long as I can and as long as my truck keeps running smooth."

In 15 years running this rig and another 10 driving semi, Clayton has never had an accident.

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Calf bottle holder is designed to hold a 2 or 3-qt. bottle and mounts on a cattle or hog panel outside the pen.

## Calf Bottle Holder "Built To Last"

"It's built to last under tough conditions," says Roger Roessner, Fort Recovery, Ohio, about his calf bottle holder.

It's designed to hold a 2 or 3-qt. bottle and mounts on a cattle or hog panel, outside the pen. It's made from powder coated, 1/4-in. cold rolled steel wire and stands 11 in. tall and 4 in. wide. When installed it extends 9 in. into the aisle.

Thick wire loops on top wrap around the top of any standard wire gate. To install it, slip the bottom of the holder between the second and third wires from the top of the pen and push the top of the holder forward, then lift it up and hook it onto the pen's top wire. "The loops extend downward 11 in. to 'weave' the bottle holder into the pen and keep calves from nuzzling the holder out of position," says Roessner.

"I've been using these calf bottle holders on my dairy farm for 10 years now and am on my sixth major design improvement. I start

170 head of 3-day old calves every 6 weeks, so they get a lot of use," says Roessner.

"I came up with the idea because the bottle holders on the market couldn't handle the wear and tear my calves put them through. I had just two options - spend my time hand-bottling calves, or fixing substandard holders. So I decided to make my own.

"Before I knew it, my neighbors wanted a batch and then the local hardware store. In the years before I came back to take over the family farm, I worked doing machine language programming and systems automation, so I'm able to produce these bottle holders here on our farm."

The calf bottle holder sells for \$7 plus S&H for orders of 12 or more. You can watch a video of it at www.Calfbottleholder.com.

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