

# World Class Collection Of Antique Dairy Equipment

By Bill Gerger, Senior Editor

Arlan Nickerson and his brother Warren and father, Dennis, have one of the largest collections of dairy farm equipment around. They exhibit at several antique tractor shows, including the Albany Pioneer Days threshing show where most of these photos were taken.

"We have a good collection of milking machines, everything from foot pedal-powered to hand-powered, gas-powered, and electric-powered models," says Arlan. "They represent many different brands, and range from 1919 up through the 1950's."

"In the old days, farmers rarely milked more than 2 cows at a time, lifting or pulling the milking machine down the center of the barn and attaching teat cups to a cow on each side. The foot pedal-powered models in our collection represent the oldest milkers, which were followed in later years by hand-powered, gas and electric models."

Here's a sampling of what's in their collection.

## 1919 Hinman Milker

This milker was designed to run back and forth on a track that ran down one side of the barn. It was operated by a 3 hp Fairbanks Z gas engine that belt-drove a gearbox that turned a rotating metal arm. The arm pushed and pulled a pair of vacuum cylinders. Each

cylinder would milk 2 cows, so if you had 12 cows you would need 6 cylinders.

"Once the milker reached the end of the barn, it would turn around and return on a second track on the other side of the barn," says Arlan.

## Hand-Powered Milker

This Macartney 1920's milker rode on a pair of small steel wheels and was designed to milk 2 cows at a time by hand. The operator pulled a long lever back and forth to operate a pair of vacuum cylinders, and the milk from each cylinder was delivered through a hose and into a milk can. When the can was full, the operator replaced it with another one.

"In those days, farmers or a delivery truck brought milk cans into town and placed them inside coolers filled with ice," says Arlan.



## Mehring Milker

Patented in 1892, the Mehring milker was used from the late 1800's to 1920. It milked 2 cows at a time and in 1914 was advertised for sale at \$75. The operator sat down on a built-in chair and pedaled bicycle-style to create vacuum in the pump. The milk was delivered into a pail that hung from a spigot.

"The Mehring milker is very rare and is probably the most sought after model by milking machine collectors," says Arlan. "The pump on it worked much like the pumps commonly used to draw water out of wells.



Company advertising said it could 'milk 20 cows per hour and do it right.'"

## Super Jack

This uncommon milker dates back to the late 1930's or early 1940's and was designed to milk 2 cows at a time. An electric motor belt-drove a cam that operated a pair of vacuum cylinders. "There isn't a lot of information on this model," says Arlan.



## Co-Op Milker

This 2-wheeled, 2-cow milker was made in the 1940's and was operated by an electric motor that direct-drove a gearbox powering a vacuum cylinder. A pair of horizontal metal rods were used to hold the vacuum lines to the teat cups.



## Milk Can Carrier

This 2-wheeled carrier was designed to pick up a milk can so the operator didn't have to. It came with a U-shaped metal rod near the top and a long handle on back. The operator placed the rod around the neck of the can and then pulled back on the handle to lift the can off the floor. As the can came up it tilted in toward the carrier, causing it to always stay level.



## Butter Box Collection

The Nickersons' popular butter box collection includes 2 big cases of butter brands from all over Minnesota - more than 50 different butter brands in all.

"If you come to a show and don't see your town's butter box, send us one with the name on it and we'll add it to our collection," says Arlan.



## National Milker

This electric-operated, 2-wheeled milker milked 2 cows at a time and delivered the milk into a big glass jar. The motor belt-drove a gearbox that pushed and pulled a vacuum cylinder that pumped milk into the jar. When the jar was full the operator picked it up and poured the milk into a can.



## How To Wash A Chicken

How to wash a chicken is a skill that comes in handy for folks who raise show chickens, and for the growing number of people who keep chickens as pets.

The skill also proved to be useful for brothers Seth Isola, 13, and Toby Isola, 11, who won grand championship in 4-H livestock demonstration at the Becker County Fair in Minnesota. Since they couldn't show their chickens, due to the outbreak of Avian Influenza in 2015, the brothers got creative.

Outfitted with rubber chickens, three plastic totes, and towels, they played "Splish, Splash" and "Chicken Dance" in the background and entertained and educated the judges.

The first step is to make sure that it's a good day for chicken bathing. It should be warm and sunny.

Three tubs are needed to hold enough warm water to cover the entire chicken except the head. Add about 1 tablespoon of Ivory liquid or liquid Castile soap to the first tub. For white or light-colored

chickens, add 1/2 cup of 20 Mule Team Borax.

The second tub is plain rinse water and the third tub has vinegar in the water (2 cups/gal. of water). That's to help shine the chicken's feathers, Seth says.

The first bath can be the trickiest, so he suggests, "hold the chicken in your armpit to calm it down." Then holding on to the bird firmly with a one hand on top and the other hand on the chicken's rump between its legs, gently plunge the chicken up and down in the first tub.

"Always keep their heads above water. Don't scrub or rub or you will break their feathers," Seth says. "Just soak them thoroughly, then lift them up to drain."

Repeat the plunging and draining in the second and third tub.

After the vinegar water drains off, gently pat the chicken dry with a bath towel. You can also use a blow dryer, but keep your hand between it and the bird to make sure it doesn't get too hot.

Once the bird is dry, check its beak and



Brothers Seth and Toby Isola use 3 tubs filled with water to wash chickens. The first tub contains soap, the second plain rinse water, and the third vinegar to help shine the chicken's feathers.

nails to see if they need to be trimmed with a nail clipper. Just cut a little at a time, Seth says, and have a powder-like baby powder handy in case a nail starts to bleed.

If the chicken has mites, it's also a good time to dust it with lice powder.

Finally it's time for "makeup" to bring out the red in the comb and wattles by rubbing them with Vaseline or baby oil.

Winning the championship with their demonstration was fun, the brothers say. But next year they hope they can get rid of the rubber chickens and wash real chickens at home to get ready for the county fair.

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