

## Can You Use A Cow Sitter?

Milking cows is a 365 days-a-year job. Or is it?

Not if you get someone to come in and spell you off on chores once in a while, and that's exactly what some dairy-men are able to do in Lancaster County, Penn. They're letting a professional "cow-sitter" take over their milking when they have to get away on an emergency, or on a vacation trip.

Dervin Hart, an experienced dairyman, hires out as a milker on farms within 25-30 miles of his home in Manheim, Penn. He goes to the farm and takes over the milking, feeding, cleanup and other chores.

Hart's base rate is \$15 per milking, which covers a herd up to 35 cows within a 15 mile radius. Over 15 miles, he charges 25 cents per mile for his travel, and over 35 cows, he charges 20 cents per cow. For example, a 50-cow herd 25 miles away would cost \$23 per milking (\$15 plus \$3 for 15 extra cows, plus \$5 for 20 extra miles).

When Hart gets a new client, he likes to go over a day or two in advance to see the operation and discuss the various chore jobs with the owner. Hart milks, feeds calves, beds down young stock and anything else in the milking routine. He will treat mastitis or call a veterinarian when needed. Other emergencies may require telephoning the owner to get instructions.

"The first milking can be a

little difficult, but after that it runs smoothly," he says. "Many dairymen are repeat customers and I know their situation. Some jobs are just one milking, or I have stayed as long as 18 days."

Hart usually milks alone at morning milkings, but he sometimes brings along his wife or a son or daughter to help at evening milking.

Over the three years he has been a "cow-sitter", Hart has built up 20 or 30 regular customers. There's no need to advertise because the word spreads from satisfied customers, he told FARM SHOW.

A bigger working area is not practical, but Hart says, "I would go a long way to do a milking if the owner was willing to pay me for the extra mileage."

"Cow-sitters" could be used in much greater numbers around the country," says Hart, who has heard of one in Canada, and a Wisconsin high school vocational agriculture class has had such a service going on a small scale for a number of years.

Hart thinks it's a good part-time job, and adds that "It's a good way of keeping up with dairying if you're planning to go into it on your own some day."

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dervin Hart, Rt. 4, Manheim, Penn. 17545 (ph 717 665-7471).

# FARM SHOW

## Best Ideas

Got a "best idea" you'd like to share with FARM SHOW readers — a new wrinkle in cropping, livestock, machinery or whatever? Maybe it's still experimental but looks promising. Or, maybe you've already taken the idea beyond the experimental stage. We'd like to hear about it. Write to: Best Ideas, c/o FARM SHOW, 8500 210 St., Lakeville, Minn. 55044.

Harold M. Johnson, Editor

## "No Fuss" Way To Wean Calves

Here's a unique "reverse twist" idea for you cow/calf operators who dread weaning time. "Instead of weaning the calves and locking them up, like we used to do, we now lock up the cows and let the calves stay right in the pasture where they've been," explains rancher Mark Keffeler, Sturgis, S.D.

Six weeks before his normal Oct. 1 weaning date, Keffeler puts one creep feeder in the pasture for every 30 calves. By weaning time, he says, most of the calves are eating the creep feed.

Keffeler and his sons sort cows off right in the pasture using portable corrals, chase them home out of bawling range, and lock them up. The calves are left in the pasture.

"It's important," Keffeler told FARM SHOW, "to get the cows out of hearing range of the calves, and to have good facilities to contain them when they are moved. Our corrals are

wooden. I doubt that wire fences would hold the anxious mothers." After three days, the Keffelers move the cows to another pasture two miles from the calves.

Keffeler says he has almost none of the sickness, doctoring and death loss he used to have when he locked up the calves. "It just works so easy. The calves don't run fences like they used to. What's more, this weaning system eliminates a lot of the normal stress and subsequent diseases usually experienced during weaning time. And, we don't lose ground on the herd as a whole."

The Keffelers sort out about 100 cows at a time and with four horses, have had no problem getting them away from their calves and herded back to head-quarters.

For details, contact Mark Keffeler, Sturgis, S.D., 57785 (ph 605 347-2187).

## "Brainstorming" Sessions Produce Profitable Ideas

Many farmers get their ideas from other farmers, but one of the best ways to do it we've seen is by "brainstorming", as practiced by a North Carolina crop and hog farmer.

He's James Ferebee, Sr., of Shawboro, who farms in partnership with his son along the Atlantic coast in the northern part of the state. The Ferebees have been reclaiming lowland of the Dismal Swamp on the coast and were looking for new ideas in this pioneer venture.

The senior Ferebee had served on a creative panel of a commercial company which was looking for outside ideas. He thought this might be just as good an idea for farmers, so he got together a group of his friends for a "brainstorming" session.

"These were all people we knew," he says, "and we brought them in for an afternoon to talk. We had snacks and coffee in the office and then we went to work. After we were finished, we wound it up with a picnic."

The Ferebees got ideas about land drainage, feeding, hog marketing and many other farm management jobs, and they felt it was well worth the time.

But Ferebee offers one rule to anybody who would try this method. "The key to success is to tell everyone to make only positive comments. No idea, no matter how wild or crazy, should be turned down," he says.