

Dairy Farm Says The Switch To A2 Milk Boosted Profits

A2 milk production processed at their own on-farm creamery may be the ticket to profitability for Joel and Amanda Hendrickson's small family dairy farm. Just a few months into their new venture, they've been overwhelmed by the response from customers. People who haven't had milk in years because they couldn't digest it are enjoying milk again and willing to pay \$1 to \$2 more at local stores for a half gallon of A2 milk from Ten Finns Creamery.

Hendrickson first read about A2 milk about 5 years ago and realized it was something he could easily transition to.

"It's not any more difficult or expensive to use an A2 bull, and I figured it wasn't going to hurt anything," he says.

A2 refers to a type of protein in milk. The other type is A1. Cows have genes to produce one or both types of protein. A1 protein causes digestion problem for some consumers, who can drink milk with just A2 protein. A2 milk has become very popular in New Zealand dairies, and the trend has started in East Coast dairies.

The Hendricksons are the first to produce the milk in Minnesota. They started by breeding their cows with A2 bulls, then DNA-tested all the cows two years ago. Hendrickson sold off cows that had A1 genes and bought A2 cows from farmers selling out. Currently, his all-A2 herd of 140 cows produces about 1,000-gal./day.

Since creameries aren't set up to process just A2 milk, Hendrickson invested in setting up his own creamery with used equipment in a 42 by 40-ft. building.

"It's right next to the parlor so milk lines go right into the creamery," Hendrickson says. While the majority of the milk currently goes to a cooperative, Hendrickson and his wife, with the help of some of their 10 children, package the milk that goes through their facility.

"Right now we sell whole milk. It's non-homogenized and we run it through the pasteurizer as low as we can to meet requirements (about 164 degrees), and it tastes great," Hendrickson says, adding that customers comment about the milk tasting different and better than "store-bought" milk.

"We run milk through our creamery a couple days a week to meet orders," he says. With increasing demand, in January sales were up to about 350 gal. a week selling to stores in the small town of Menahga and surrounding communities.

Hendrickson knows that educating consumers about a new product and marketing are challenging, so he has been pleased with the response from store owners and customers.

"Some buy it because it's easy to digest; others just to support us. People promote my milk. One convenience store quit selling other milk and gave out samples of our milk. Just the support from lots of people has been amazing," he says.

The attention to a new product has also attracted the interest of media and a couple of distributors. If sales grow enough, Hendrickson will hire someone to run the creamery, and he will focus on the cows and milking. He is also looking at processing



Joel and Amanda Hendrickson process A2 milk at their own on-farm creamery, with the help of some of their 10 children.

2 percent milk and making butter with the cream. With a creamery, there are plenty of opportunities.

"With 10 kids, there's a good chance one of them will take over," Hendrickson says. "If A2 milk makes us more sustainable and it helps others who couldn't drink milk, that's

great to see, too."

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Hand-Forged Tools Created At Blacksmith's "Hammer Heaven"

By Paul E. Tierney

This is the tale of blacksmith Brent Bailey who has made thousands of hammers of all shapes and sizes and also helps others make their own. The full-time blacksmith pounds out hammers to sell and makes videos for do-it-yourselfers - with nearly 90 videos in all.

He cut his teeth as a young lad working nearly 20 hrs. a day, 7 days a week, stoking coal furnaces in Gary, Ind. One day, while feeding a furnace, he noticed a small billet of red hot steel by the door of the firehole. He pulled it out and pounded it into his first hammer head.

He soon set up Brent Bailey Forge. "Like an old style blacksmith, I service everyone who comes through the door. Gradually a market developed for my hammers and other tools."

Bailey still does custom projects, but he also turns out what he calls his production line. It's a wide variety of hammers and blacksmithing tools. Hammers range from 1 1/2-lb. cross-pein hammers for small forging or bench work to 25-lb. sledges. The production hammer line includes framing and finishing hammers, ball-pein, farrier and sword making hammers, as well as a wide variety of other sizes, shapes and types for blacksmithing and general metal work.

Some buyers have reported buying Bailey's hammers simply for display. Growing demand hasn't driven up prices.

"I don't like the business model of if I'm busy, I can raise my prices," says Bailey. "I tried to create low overhead for myself and constantly try to get better and faster at what I do to keep prices down."

Faster means that from start to finish, including dressing and polishing the head and shaping the hickory handle, it takes Bailey around 2 1/2 hrs.

A finishing hammer is priced at \$150. The small cross-pein hammer is only \$60, while a 7-lb., short handled, straight-pein for heavy forging and driving work is \$175. Every hammer comes with a forged American Flag key fob and a hand-forged bottle opener.

Bailey is expanding into a line of production axes, beginning with the \$195 Middle of Nowhere. It is a shorter handled, 2 3/4 to 3-lb. axe.

"I plan to continue making tools. However I also want to start developing new products and ideas," says Bailey.

His 88 YouTube videos cover everything from working with a power hammer to punching holes and forging hammers, drill bits, and hardie tool shanks for anvil work. Other videos cover blacksmithing tips and reflections on resources, as well as setting tool handles.

He is producing a series of documentaries about metalwork and metalworkers. These can be streamed from Vimeo for \$5 for 1 week. His 54-page, full-color, "10 Hammers" book details how to forge 120 different styles of hammers using open die forging methods. He is now working on a second book on forging 10 types of axes.

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Blacksmith Brent Bailey sells hand-forged hammers of all shapes and sizes, and also creates videos for do-it-yourselfers.



Hammers range from 1 1/2-lb. cross-pein hammers to 25-lb. sledges. Each hammer comes with a forged American Flag key fob.



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