

Raw Milk Customers Own The Cows

Under Ohio law, owners of cows have a legal right to drink the milk they produce but they can't sell it to others. Thanks to that "loophole", combined with legal action taken by the Streits and other raw milk producers, people can buy shares in the Streit herd and get raw milk from cows that they own.

"The first of the year we had 450 families who owned shares in our 30-cow herd," says Joe Streit. "We get several calls a week asking about shares and keep adding families."

A full herd share contract includes a one-time deposit of \$50 and yields 52 gal. of milk a year. Shareholders pay the Streits \$30 a month to maintain the cows, jug the milk, and make or package other raw dairy products. Delivery is extra, depending on distance from the farm. Most shareholders pick up the milk at the farm, while others pick it up from drop-station coolers in various areas served by the Streits.

"We use the honor system at the farm and at our coolers," says Streit. "The milk or other products are in the cooler with the shareholder's name on them. We seldom have a problem."

Streit notes that some drop sites are at other farm stores in the area. "They may produce eggs or meat, but not raw milk," says Streit. "Our raw milk shareholders become customers of theirs also."

Shareholders can also get butter, cream

or yogurt for a processing charge of \$7 for a quart of yogurt, a 1/2-lb. of butter or a pint of cream. Streit emphasizes that the milk that goes into these products is free. If a shareholder goes on vacation or can't use their weekly gallon of milk, they qualify for its \$7 equivalent in other products.

When totaled up, the Streits estimate their milk brings in about \$80 per hundred lbs. That's well over 4 times the price Ohio dairy farmers currently receive selling to processors.

The Streits didn't start out as dairy farmers. Dietary problems and health concerns led them to information on the benefits of raw milk from the Weston A. Price Foundation.

"Raw milk was their cornerstone product, but I was severely lactose intolerant," recalls Streit. "They encouraged me to try raw milk, and I didn't get sick."

After buying a cow of their own in 2005 and then a second one to cover dry periods, they began getting requests for raw milk from others.

"After we set up the herd share program, the state department of agriculture challenged us in court, but we won," says Streit. "We started selling a few shares, and after the first year had sold 40 contracts. We bought several more cows and soon were buying cows every other month as the number of shares grew."

They stayed at 100 shares the first year and by the third year were at 200 shares. Streit notes that promotion is strictly word of



People can buy shares in the Streit's dairy herd and get raw milk from the cows. Most shareholders pick up the milk at the farm, but delivery is available.

mouth, with about a quarter of shareholders in the medical profession.

The Streits are careful to maintain a clean and healthy environment at their farm. Cows are milked in a 6-head milking parlor using 50-year-old equipment Streit bought from another farmer in 2008. In 2015 the herd was moved into a freestall barn with a center feed alley. They also have access to pasture and are fed a forage-based, non-GMO ration with no soy. During winter months the cows are fed sprouted barley from a hydroponic system.

Herd share members have full access to the farm. With many stopping by to pick up their product, the medical personnel among them are the farm's quality control inspectors.

"They do come through and look," he says. "We try to keep everything as spotless as we can. We also check somatic cell counts

monthly and test for Johne's disease several times a year."

Since the first cow, they have stayed with Jerseys for their economy of size, production and butterfat. They also like the size of the Jersey steer, especially those that are half Angus. Cows are bred AI with only the best being bred back to Jersey for replacement heifers.

"We sell the steers for \$2 per pound on the hoof," says Streit. "The 315 to 450 lbs. of meat harvested is about the right amount for our customers."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe and Janet Streit, 3070 Wehr Rd., Hamilton, Ohio 45011 (ph 513 284-7330; info@doublejfarmohio.com; www.doublejfarmohio.com).

Compost Business Bigger And Better Than Ever

Edwin Blosser introduced his first composting machine, the Aeromaster, 24 years ago in FARM SHOW (Vol. 20, No. 6). His company, Midwest Bio Systems (MBS), has matured and expanded in the years since with more machines and a wide array of other products. They include windrow covers and equipment to handle them, compost tea extractors, testing equipment and inoculants. The company even offers workshops on composting.

"The workshops are a good place for people considering a composting business to get started," says Kelly Young, Midwest Bio Systems. "With our workshops and our products, we want to teach you how to make the best possible compost you can. We also offer advanced workshops, but people often come back and review the entry workshop as there is so much information covered."

The \$875, 3-day workshops combine classroom and on-site demonstrations covering everything from building a recipe and understanding feedstocks to building and monitoring the windrow. They include using products to make better compost and tips on using and marketing the end product.

"The compost talks to you through temperature and CO2 release," explains Young. "If they're not right, there is something wrong in your recipe or process."

Young emphasizes that properly made compost should not smell like the feedstock, such as manure. Inoculants sold by the company cover the 3 phases of compost making: breakdown, build-up and finish.

"They help capture and stabilize nutrients, reduce odor, turn organic matter into humus and increase overall microbial population and diversity," explains Young.

"The machines are built heavy, very sturdy and durable," says Young. "They don't have a lot of moving parts, and they last a long time. We hear from people with equipment they've used for 12 years or more."

The pull-type composters range in size for sites producing from 5,000 to 40,000 tons of finished compost per season.

"We manufacture and sell 6 different models today," says Young. "Over the years the big change has been drum design. The microorganisms need oxygen to break down the waste, and we've redone the drum tines for good aeration. We also add water as we turn the material to maintain 40 to 45 percent moisture."

She notes that an important feature of the company's composters is their auto-trip mechanism. Should a composter hit a chunk of concrete or other heavy object, the auto-trip prevents tearing up the pto.

"We have the ability to lift out of the windrow, remove the problem material and go back into the same spot," says Young. "It is a handy feature simply for checking material in the middle of a pile."

Windrow fabric covers and equipment to unroll and reroll the covers helps protect the developing compost from sun and wind, as well as excess moisture. The 2 models and fabrics match windrows made by the company's 2 larger and 2 smaller composters.

The company's Compost Tea Extraction Systems capture soluble and suspended minerals, humic substances, enzymes and microbes at 3 times the rate of brewed compost tea. "Unlike brewed tea systems with a shelf life of 24 to 48 hours, the extracted tea can be stored for 2 to 3 weeks before being used," says Young.

When FARM SHOW did its first story, the relatively new company had already shipped composters to 25 states. Today the company claims customers in 48 states and 28 different countries.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Midwest Bio Systems, 28933 35-E St., Tampico, Ill. 61283 (ph 815 438-7200; toll free 800 689-0714; info@midwestbiosystems.com; www.midwestbiosystems.com).



Midwest Bio Systems's pull-type composters are available for producers handling up to 40,000 tons of finished compost per season.



The company sells windrow fabric covers and equipment to unroll them.