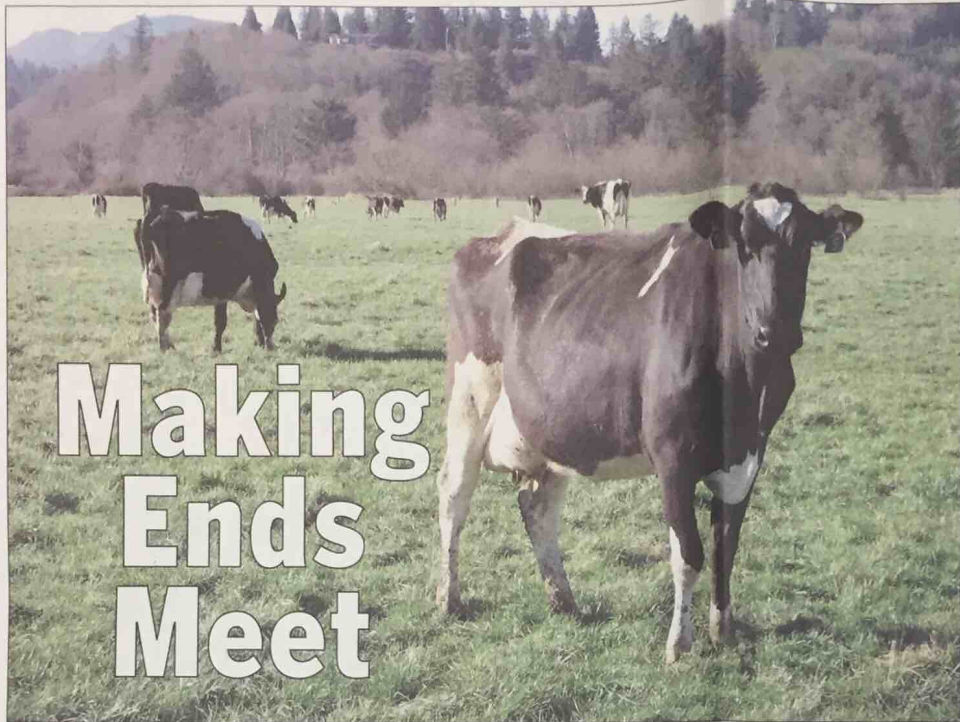


# AGRICULTURE

Section A, Page A17 February 7, 2007

Headlight-Herald

Denise Porter, Agriculture Correspondent



## Making Ends Meet

### Floods, fuel, feed costs squeeze farmers

By DENISE PORTER  
Agriculture Correspondent

It has been a tough winter so far for the county's dairy farmers, thanks to bad weather, hay shortages and high diesel and feed prices.

Weather and flooding have already taken a huge toll on local farms. Damage estimates at TCCA ran nearly \$2 million for the November flood, and Bryan Gibson, farm quality manager for the co-operative says he "hasn't even begun to total the amount of money lost during December's power outage."

Moreover, for every farm in the county, even those that escaped serious weather damage, this winter has brought increased production costs due

**'Our prayer is that spring is just around the corner and that this year's hay crop doesn't get damaged.'**

- ROBERT OBRIST

to high fuel and feed prices.

#### Feed costs

"Feed, and cannery corn prices in particular, have especially been a problem," Gibson said.

Local dairymen who use cannery corn waste as an energy feed source for their cows are now facing a lack of supply, according to local hauler

George Prince. He said supply will be "nonexistent" for the next several months. "If you didn't contract it to begin with, there's virtually nothing to get now." Along with the short supply, Prince said he estimates that the cost is up significantly over last year — at least \$4 per ton. It now stands at from \$48 to \$51 per ton.

Fuel prices, although slightly lower than they were a year ago, continue to eat into farm budgets. According to Sheldon Oil in Tillamook, the current price of diesel is \$2.19 per gallon for on-road and \$1.95 for ultra-low-sulfur off-road diesel. This compares to \$2.31 and \$2.05, respectively, in January 2006, a decrease of 5 and 6 percent.

#### Fuel impacts

High fuel prices affect the price of hauling hay, grain and cannery corn. And, of course, they impact the cost of operating farm machinery.

"You have to have diesel to run tractors," said one dairyman, who said he is disgusted with the price of fuel.

See COSTS, Page A22

## Roots

Tillamook County's dairy farming tradition runs many generations deep. This is one of a series of articles about our multi-generation dairy families.



Sharon and Ken Jenck

### Jenck farm spans five generations

By DENISE PORTER  
Agriculture Correspondent

As the middle generation of one of the most prominent five-generation Tillamook county dairy families, Ken Jenck, 78, remembers many of the early farming practices and struggles of Tillamook County dairy pioneers. He also wonders what kind of challenges his grandchildren will face when and if they decide to come home to the Jenck Dairy on Gienger Road.

Jenck's grandparents, Peter and Mary Jenck, homesteaded on the land that now houses the Cloverdale grade school, after moving to Tillamook County from Illinois and attempting to farm one year on a farm adjacent to the Tillamook High School. (Currently owned by Dean and Patti Tohl)

"They had a huge flood that year, and my grandparents decided to find a farm high enough to be out of the flood water," he recalled. The original farm was 160 acres of "low ground, timber, prairie land and river bottom."

Jenck's parents, Martin and Rose Jenck, were married in 1924 and gave birth to five children with distinct nicknames: Edward (Mix), Gertrude (Bobby), Kenneth (Hag), Donald (Hooker) and Francis (Zep). The Jencks continued to farm the South County property until Ken Jenck was in the first grade. Then they moved to Central County because, according to Jenck, his parents wanted the kids to attend Catholic school.

"We were milking less than 20 cows when we moved," he said. "My dad never did believe in purebred cattle. We grew chickens and hogs, too, and dad cut wood on the side. My grandparents didn't move with us because they'd already passed away. In fact, one of the family stories we tell is that my brother, Hooker, was born in April of 1930, and my grandmother took one look at him and dropped over dead!"

Jenck recalls milking cows by hand, cooling milk overnight in cold water troughs, loading the 100-pound cans into the back of a truck and hauling them into the Tillamook Creamery, which then was located where Roby's Furniture

See JENCKS, Page A18

### Dairy couple retiring

Fitches look forward to traveling, raising heifers

By DENISE PORTER  
Agriculture Correspondent

BEAVER — For long-time dairy farmers Melvin and Delores Fitch, a spring has never looked so promising as that of 2007.

While most Tillamook dairymen are looking ahead to better weather and hoping for higher milk prices and lower feed costs, this is the year the Fitches will no longer rise early in the morning and work late into the evening milking cows.

Instead, after 44 years of dairying together, the newly retired couple will spend two months touring all of the U.S. National Parks in an RV caravan.

"We sold the rest of our milking herd on Oct. 12, 2006," Delores said. "But it's not like we're really retired. We still have heifers here."

The Fitches sold their herd of registered Holsteins in two lots over seven years to Mark and Stephanie Miranda of Premium Farm in Tillamook. Even so, the Fitches plan to raise the rest of their young stock, as well as some Premium Farm heifers. The work is less time con-

See FITCH, Page A21



Delores and Melvin Fitch



# JENCKS

From Page A17

sits today.

"Farming was really seasonal then," he said. "In the winter, you'd have maybe four or five cans, but summertime saw 10 to 12. We never cooled the milk lower than 60 degrees. Nowadays, the law requires farmers to cool the milk to below 40 degrees one hour after the milking is over."

In 1942, the Jenck family moved for the last time to their current farm site on Gienger Road. They rented the farm from an uncle first, then bought it in 1952. The farm consisted of 40 acres and 45 cows and had two portable milking machines.

After 18 months in the Army from 1946 to 1948, Jenck pursued one year of college at the University of Portland before coming home to the farm.

"I told my dad that, if I was coming home to farm, the horses had to go! I was not going to haul cow manure in a wagon behind horses anymore. Dad bought his first tractor shortly after."

Jenck was 34 years old in 1963 when he married his wife, Sharon. They met at Sacred Heart Catholic Church while attending mass. She was from near Molalla and her father was also from a farm family. Their first two dates, she said, were a disaster.

"He brought me flowers and I had an asthma attack. Then I chipped a tooth on some candy he brought me. On the third date, my mother said, 'he's going to ask you to marry him,' and I said, 'I hope not. He's a creep!'"

Ken Jenck's father died in 1960, so Ken and Sharon Jenck, together with his mother, farmed together until Ken and Sharon became sole owners in 1975. Brother Hooker Jenck had left the home farm and established his own dairy in 1948 near today's KTIL-FM facilities just west of Tillamook.

"Hooker always had a truck and was hauling something for somebody," said Jenck. "I had one, too, until 1970, when I decided it was time to stay home and get serious about farming. As it was, my mother milked cows with me until she was well into her 90s."

Today, Hooker Jenck's sons, Joe and Donnie, still milk cows at Jenck Farms and run a dairy trucking company, as well.

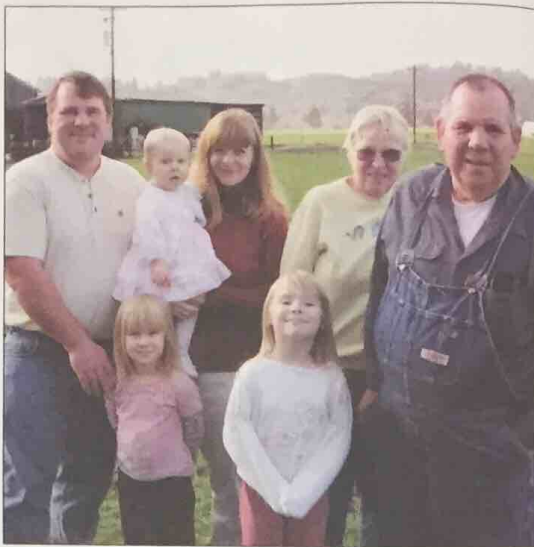
"Me and Hooker always worked together, but we ran separate farms and kept separate books. It worked out well that way. Our sons are really close, too."

Sharon Jenck's role at the farm was to care for their five children, Therese, Marcine, Michael, Timothy and Jim.

"It was always difficult and challenging raising kids and farming. We had three sit-down meals a day, and everything back then was physically harder," she recalled.

During the years the Jencks were involved on the dairy, they built a 60-cow stanchion barn and a four-cow, L-shaped herringbone milking parlor. It was the first milking parlor Ken Jenck had ever milked in.

"I built it in the L shape so my kids could play in the parlor while I was milking and we



DENISE PORTER/HEADLIGHT-HERALD

**The Jenck family: Back, from left: Tim and Melanie Jenck with baby Emma, Sharon and Ken Jenck. Front: Rachel and Katey Jenck**

wouldn't feel cramped in there," he said.

Later, the parlor was expanded to milk eight cows.

Jenck recalls the TCCA strike of 1959 vividly.

"Oregon was working on a quota system back then. Each farmer was only allowed to produce a certain amount of milk per year. I wanted to keep the quota system because I felt it limited herd size and ensured that small farms could keep in production. TCCA didn't want that, and so we started shipping our milk to McMinnville."

Jenck stayed with the McMinnville plant for 10 or 12 years, he said.

"By then, Oregon didn't have quota anymore and our milk was being bought from McMinnville by TCCA and shipped right down the road to them, but we were still paying hauling fees to haul it to McMinnville and getting their milk price!"

Today, Jenck said, he misses

his definition of family farming. "Grange, church functions and community gatherings are gone — a thing of the past. Family farming today requires extra employees to work the farm. We did it all as a family ... worked together, ate together. I don't like how little farmers of today actually physically work. But, it's a lifestyle change for this entire generation, not just the farmers."

Jenck's son, Tim, who along with his wife, Melanie, purchased the farm in 1997 after renting it for five years, agrees with his father that life on today's family farm is different from the days of his childhood.

"Back then, milking the cows was the hardest task of the day. Now, it's the easiest. There's the salesmen, technology, harsher government regulations ... the list is endless."

Today Tim Jenck milks 150 Holstein cows and owns two farms on 115 acres. He said he

worries that many people are choosing the area for second homes and wonders whether Tillamook County can sustain many more large dairies while maintaining good relationships with their non-farming neighbors. Jenck Dairy, he noted, is surrounded by houses that weren't there a generation ago.

"We (dairy farmers) really need to be friendly with our neighbors and keep their best interests in mind."

Even so, said Ken Jenck, "this is still a great place to milk cows."

**Kubota**  
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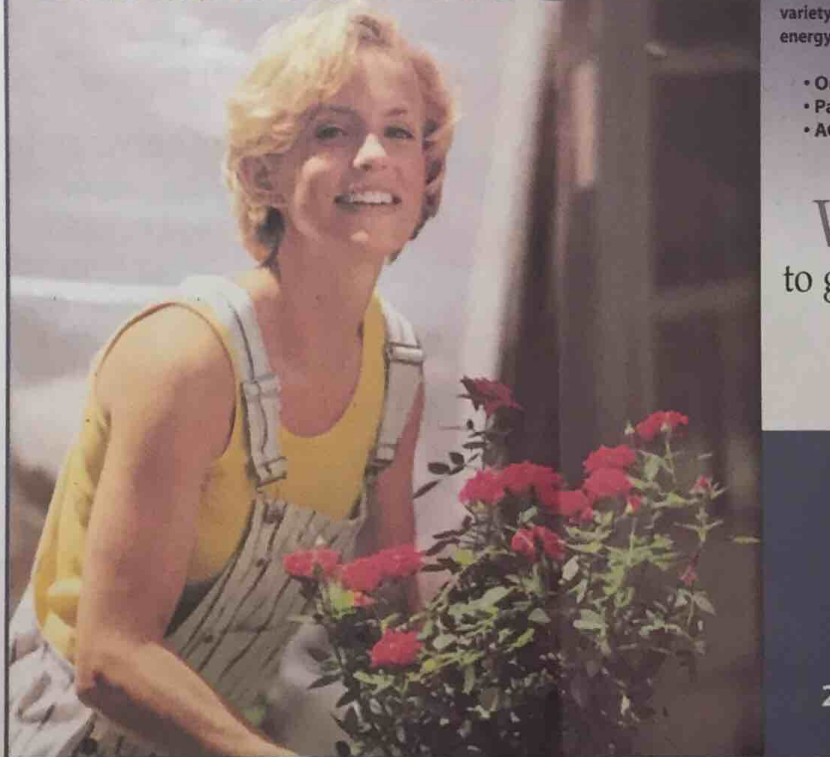


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