



## Investing Where it Counts

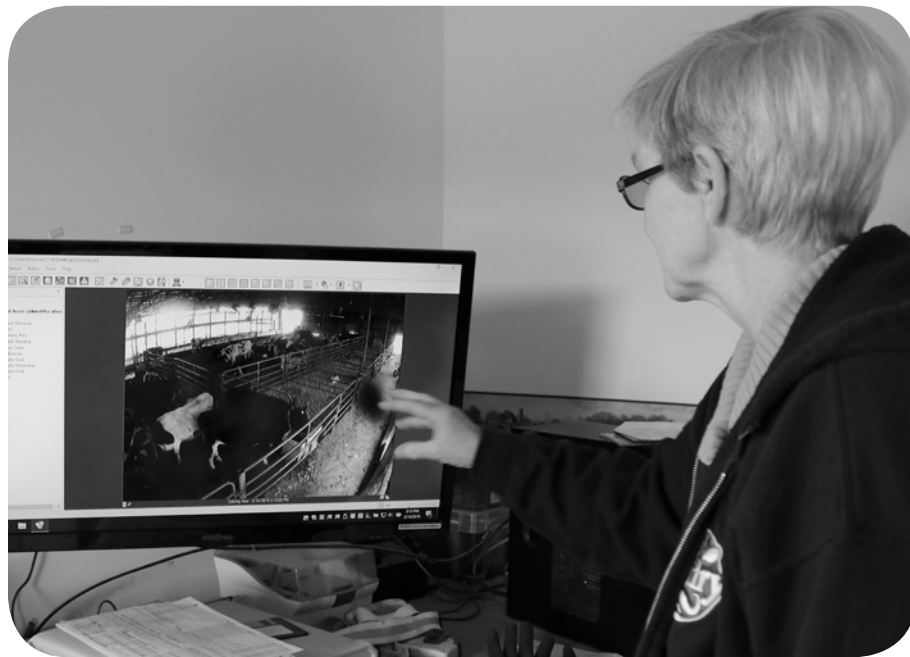
By Molly Gildea, Asst. Manager Marketing & Communications

Scattered Acres Farm, appropriately named, is comprised of 2 milking facilities and multiple heifer locations scattered throughout Berks and Lancaster Counties, PA. The farm is owned by Hartman brothers Edward, David, and Paul. While Diane Hartman didn't grow up on a farm, she's been here ever since she married her high school boyfriend, Ed. Today, the fifth and sixth generations of the Hartman family are milking about 1,000 cows.

Not only is Diane an employee on the family farm, she is an active member of the Pennsylvania Farm Women, sits on the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania Board, and is involved in her local FSA branch. While this seems like a lot, to Diane it's time that's well invested. "Being active in these organizations is important because the people who can best represent dairy are dairy farmers themselves," explains Diane. "I used to think that other people could represent the dairy industry, but it's really time that dairy farmers step up and represent ourselves." Being active in these organizations also keeps Diane informed about current policies and legislation that may affect the farm. It helps her to know what types of programs the farm should be signing up for and to be aware of discussion about future policies and programs.

On top of all this, Diane is also one of the newest members of Dairy One's Board of Directors. She says its her strong belief in Dairy One and the services they offer that led her to join the Board of Directors in 2018. "We've always benefited from their services and I'm excited to be able to contribute to Dairy One's future," Diane says about joining the board.

Scattered Acres uses a variety of Dairy One services, making Diane a great fit for the board. DHIA testing provides Diane, who manages cow records, and the rest of the management team with information such as SCC and milk urea nitrogen (MUN) which they rely on when making herd decisions. "The information we get from DHIA testing is important to our cow management," explains Diane. "We will not stop testing, that's for sure." The farm receives their records in Dairy Comp 305, which is also a valuable tool used to manage their herd.



Another important management tool Dairy One has provided the farm with is cameras. "Anytime I'm in the main office, I'm using the cameras," Diane says. "Mostly to see what's happening in the tank area, what's happening in the calving area, and what's happening in the milk rooms." In addition to managing cow records, Diane is also the person responsible for most of the employee training that goes on at Scattered Acres. While she doesn't use cameras for group trainings, she has found them to be a valuable tool for one on one conversations when an incident or issue needs to be addressed. "For example, someone came to me and said the other guys said he left the gate open, but he knew he closed it. So, I said 'Okay, lets take a look.' We went back and looked at the video



and while he did close the gate, it evidently was not enough because then we see the cows push it open. We both could clearly see what actually happened and that helps a lot."

Cameras are just one example of an investment in technology that can bring tremendous value to a farm. With that being said, technology is an investment and when it stops providing value it becomes just an expense. With the milk price the way it is, there is no room on the farm for things that don't contribute value, and Scattered Acres is no exception. Diane explains that they've become more thoughtful about a lot of things they do on the farm in order to control costs and use funds more efficiently. One of these things is ensuring the technology they have is working well and providing them with the information they need. "We've been using one type of activity collar, that is relatively low cost, but hasn't been reliable and doesn't interface well with our other software," Diane explained. "We've decided to instead make a slightly larger investment into rumination collars that are going to provide us with much more information and work with the other systems we have in place."

The Hartman's have also found other areas of their business where they can cut costs. They've been able to replace some of their bedding with ground up dry board from the local gypsum plant and reduce the number of landlines on the farm since everyone has a cell phone. Due to an abundance of heifers, they've had the opportunity to be highly selective in their culling decisions, culling not just older cows but instead culling cows or heifers that aren't going to positively contribute to the herd.

Despite the challenges that the farm and the industry face, be it weather, milk price, or another variable, Diane has still found a number of reasons to remain excited about what she does. "My employees thrill me to no end," Diane says with a smile. "I think they're the best people in the world for being here and doing a great job, even on the coldest, harshest days." While she has an undeniable appreciation for her employees, it's clear that the thing that really keeps Diane going at the end of the day is the cows. "The best thing that happens to me on the farm in a day is having a calf that's up and jumping around," she says. "It's the neatest thing and it really never gets old for me."

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