

# Success-ion Planning: Where's Your Map?

by Suzanne Perdue, Communications Specialist

**Planning is invaluable, provided you stop and make time to do it. All too often planning gets pushed to the side or covered up with much more urgent “to dos.” For the Clowney family of Lagging Stream Farm in Gettysburg, Pa., taking time to map out a plan will be the key to keeping their farm in business and profitable farther down the road and something they’re not putting off anymore.**

**P**atriarch Tom Clowney moved to his 350 acre farm in Gettysburg, Pa. in 1960. Seventeen years later, his son Bob joined the operation followed closely by his son John. The two brothers added their growing families to the mix, and their sister Carol and her son Zach have also become involved. Today Tom is retired leaving the 200-cow farm in the capable hands of his children. With so many family members involved, Bob and John quickly realized they needed a succession plan.

They started by broaching the subject with their business consultant, who suggested they contact someone specializing in dairy succession and even utilizing a profit team approach. The concept of a profit team involves pooling together different individuals (such as a vet, nutritionist, loan officer, etc.) to form a team that helps develop a profitability plan that will work best for your farm. The Clowneys had previously met with each individual on a regular basis but everyone sitting down together made a lot of sense as the farm prepared for the next generation.

Getting started was easier than they expected. The family worked with the Pennsylvania Center for Dairy Excellence which has established Profit Team and Succession Team programs.

Their Dairy Decision Consultant provided a list of suggested players to help determine who should sit around the table and worked with the Clowneys to brainstorm possible ideas and directions, as well as coordinate the team meetings.

Although the Clowney family is only in the early stages of their planning process, they feel that it is an investment that will pay off down the road. “People should take the time to make plans because it’s for your own piece of mind,” says Tom. “We have seen other farms that don’t have a plan and no one has a clue what will happen in the next few years or even in the next few months.”

With fewer and fewer young people interested in returning to the farm, John feels that it is important to make it possible for the next generation to work into the farm. “We are working to develop a more organized structure so that everyone knows where they stand,” he says. “It’s our goal to see the farm stay in business and work in all of the individuals that want to be involved.”

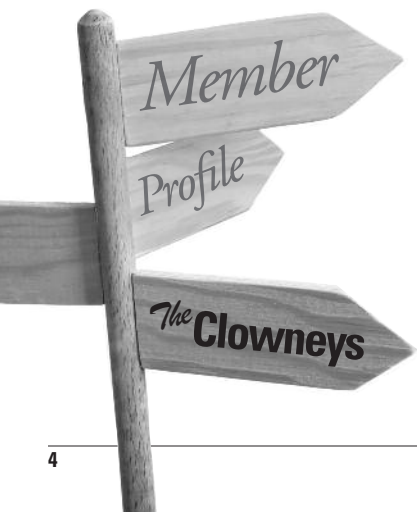
The Clowneys realize planning for the future is a big step and a large investment. They recommend looking for outside advisors and researching options rather than going it alone.

More importantly, the Clowneys’ best advice is to “Just do it” and pursue some sort of plan. “Things happen slowly, yet go by so fast,” John wisely shares. If you don’t take the time to make a plan, before you know it you just might be at a major crossroads with no map to help you navigate.

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*“Things happen slowly, yet go by so fast” John Clowney says.*



### Water Systems

Air driven water supplies have come under scrutiny lately. The FDA has mandated new regulations to protect these systems from bacteria. This type of well utilizes air under pressure to drive water in a submerged cylinder into a water pressure tank. The air comes in direct contact with the potable water supply and therefore must be protected with a regulator, moisture trap and a dry air filter. These filters should be installed on the main air line dedicated to the well and in a place that affords temperature protection so they do not freeze and break in the winter. The danger with this type of system to the milk supply is that the water used to clean and sanitize dairy utensils may be laden with bacteria from the forced air supply.

Again, we know that air is all around us and that it is full with bacteria. What is important is to keep the bacteria in the air and not allow it to contaminate our milk supplies. Maintenance is the key to preventing air-borne bacterial contamination, maintaining low PI counts and producing a high quality product.



Water System

Questions about PI counts and milk quality? Call Pete at 717-756-6949 or e-mail him at pschaefer@mdvamilk.com.

#### WELCOME New Producers

December

Carter & Beiler Cattle Company, Trenton, Ky.  
Matthew and Lynn Hubbard, Peterstown, WVa.  
Venture and Luck Farm, Walkersville, Md.

#### WELCOME Transfer Producers

December

Hickory Mea Farm, Airville, Pa.

# Welcome!

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#### The Profit Team Approach

Pennsylvania's Center for Dairy Excellence launched the Dairy Profit Team Program in 2005 to help Pennsylvania dairy farms establish on-farm resource teams to tackle various farm issues from productivity and nutrition to quality and succession planning. Since 2005, more than 200 farms have leveraged this resource to "get the right people around the table" to help them make better business decisions that benefit their operations. Their results speak volumes:

- Cow numbers increased by 12 head, or about 7 percent, per farm, based on numbers before and after the inception of the teams.
- The team approach helped to drive a nearly 2-pound increase in daily milk production per cow, with about 72 percent of the farms showing increases in milk production.
- Milk quality increased significantly, with somatic cell counts dropping an average of 40,000 (or 14 percent) after the inception of the team.



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- Lowering somatic cell counts translates to additional milk quality premiums, with more than \$268,000 in estimated premiums added to the bottom lines of the participating farms.
- Improved overall reproduction, with an average pregnancy rate increase of 2.38 percent.

Using the profit team approach to make better business decisions or to troubleshoot a problem area can lead to greater profitability and enhanced performance, and not just in Pennsylvania. Any farm in any state can use this same concept to improve farm profitability. To learn more about establishing a Profit Team please contact Heidi Zimmerman by phone at 717-346-0849 or at c-hzimmerm@pa.state.us.



## Conference Call Learning Series

Pennsylvania's Center for Dairy Excellence offers a conference call learning series called "Mastering the Dairy Business" to provide dairy producers with the insight and expertise they need to manage their dairy in an ever-changing industry. The calls are open to any dairy producer, regardless of location, and are provided free of charge. The next call will be held on Wednesday, March 2 from 12:00-1:15 p.m. Daniel Basse, president of AgResource Company, will share his insights on "A Global Outlook for Dairy in 2011 and Beyond." Daniel is a commodities economist who founded AgResource Company as a domestic and international agricultural research firm. Producers interested in participating in this call can register by contacting the Center for Dairy Excellence at 717-346-0849 or send an e-mail to info@centerfordairyexcellence.org.